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ABSTRACT

Presented are findings of a 1986 national survey of 1000 American students between the ages of 8 and 17 years. Face-to-face interviews focused on youths' perceptions of their families, their schools, and major social issues confronting them. After a preview highlighting important findings, in-depth results and commentary are offered with supporting charts and tables. Chapter 1 reveals respondents' satisfaction with their home lives, their school lives, and their personal situation. The students' major concerns and expectations are explored in a broad national context. Chapter 2 examines respondents' family relationships, evaluates the "problem areas" in family life, and suggests improvements. The chapter also discusses how children perceive the provision of parental guidance, and examines the impact of working mothers on children's livelihood. Chapter 3 looks at students' evaluations of curriculum areas and of how well their schools are providing the basic elements of education, as well as students' suggestions about ways to improve the quality of education. In addition, the chapter reveals students' aspirations for their lives after high school. Chapter 4 probes sensitive problems confronting American society today, including discipline in the schools, sex education, drug and alcohol abuse education, and socio-political issues affecting schools. Concluding sections describe the survey methodology and provide a copy of the 56-item questionnaire. (RH)

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The American Chicle Youth Poll

A Study Conducted by The Roper Organization Inc.

A landmark study on the attitudes of American Youth

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The American Chicle
Youth Poll

Commissioned by
The American Chicle Group,
Warner-Lambert Company

March 1987

Conducted by
The Roper Organization Inc.

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The American Chicle Group has donated the questionnaire and the complete data set to The Roper Center, a non-profit repository of survey research data located at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut 06268. Researchers, journalists, policy makers and other interested individuals who wish to conduct additional analyses of the data may write or call The Roper Center at (203) 486-4440.

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John F. Walsh
Vice President
Warner Lambert Company
- - - -
President
American Chicle

WARNER LAMBERT

March 10, 1987

Children are the nation's future. How they view the country--its problems and prospects--is vitally important to the nation's well being.

There is no question that the 1980's have ushered in an era of unprecedented change for America's children. Changing lifestyles in the United States have placed new pressures on children and presented them with challenges unknown to previous generations.

The American Chicle Group of Warner-Lambert Company, which has made consumer products enjoyed by American children for over a century, commissioned this survey to develop a broader understanding of how children view the world around them.

The survey was conducted by the Roper Organization, one of the foremost names in public opinion and attitude research. We are pleased to share the results with you, and hope you will find them of value.

Sincerely,

John F. Walsh

John F. Walsh, President
American Chicle

JFW/jr

THE ROPER ORGANIZATION INC.

BURNS W. ROPER
Chairman

March 10, 1987

There are few subjects in our society which spark such a concerned and emotional response from the American people as the topic of children.

Numerous surveys taken over the past few years have documented high levels of public concern about issues relating to children: their problems and prospects, their happiness and home life, their education today and their potential tomorrow.

However, these surveys have generally interviewed adults about their perceptions of American youth. The American Chicle Youth Poll talks to youth themselves, about their hopes and worries, their families and schools, their attitudes and opinions.

Because of its unique perspective, The American Chicle Youth Poll sheds an entirely new light on the problems and prospects of America's children.

We thank the American Chicle Group of Warner-Lambert Company for giving us the opportunity to conduct this survey on their behalf, and for sharing the results with you.

Sincerely,

Burns W. Roper

BWR/rm

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Introduction

The American Chicle Youth Poll

The Roper Organization Inc.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of a national survey on American youth, commissioned by the American Chicle Group of the Warner-Lambert Company and conducted by The Roper Organization.

Over the years, many polls have explored elements of the problems and prospects of America's youth, such as the quality of the educational system, the problems of drug and alcohol abuse, the strains on the modern family. However, these surveys have generally interviewed adults *about their perceptions of American youth. The American Chicle Youth Poll is unique in that it talks to youth themselves, between the ages of 8 and 17, about their own perceptions of their families, their schools, and the major social issues that confront them. It provides a forum for America's young people to speak to the adult population about the things that concern them.*

Few subjects in our society spark such a concerned and emotional response from the American people as the topic of children. Children's problems and prospects, their happiness and home life, their education today and their personal potential tomorrow: numerous surveys among adults have documented high levels of public concern about these issues. And such concern is not just limited to today's parents but runs, much more broadly, throughout our society at large.

In part, public worries about America's children are a perfectly natural—indeed, an instinctive—state of mind. Our children are our future. They represent our hopes for a better tomorrow. They are the living expression of our fundamental optimism. Through them, society—virtually every society—perpetuates itself and insures its continued evolution.

Just as a mother instinctively protects her brood, so too does a society desire the best conditions for and treatment of its youngest generation. And as a mother's worries are never over, so too are society's concerns about its children constant and enduring.

Yet in addition to such natural worries about the young and their future, public attention to a wide range of issues affecting children has recently been rising.

Numerous threats, real and perceived, to America's young preoccupy public thinking and are given widespread coverage by the media. The problems of drug and alcohol abuse rank very high on the list of national concerns, largely because of their impact on children. The high divorce rate and the increase in the number of single-parent households

INTRODUCTION

have bred growing fears about a decay of the traditional family structure and the impoverishment—financial and emotional—of the young. The crimes of child abuse, molestation, kidnapping are thought by Americans to be more pervasive than ever before.

And other threats—this time, international in nature—have raised serious questions about the quality of education being provided to American children. America's gaping trade deficit and apparent loss of international competitiveness are focusing attention on our system of education. Our young people, it is being said, are not being adequately trained in the key disciplines required in an advanced economy. Worse, there is the perception that today's students are slipping backward—compared to prior generations and to other cultures (particularly the Japanese)—in their mastery of the educational basics.

Finally, certain long-term social trends underway in the United States have brought "children's issues" to the forefront of public debate. The first of these trends is the maturation of the "baby boom" generation: its move into the family-forming and child-raising years of life. Quite simply, there will be many more parents in the near future than there have been been in the recent past, and this "parents constituency" is not only growing but becoming more vocal.

The second major trend having a profound effect on the lives of children has been—and will continue to be—the rapid move of women into the workplace. Working women today comprise more than the young, the single, the career-minded; most of them, in fact, are mothers. In most married couples now, both spouses work. This transformation of the family structure—from the traditional single wage-earner household to the modern two-income household—has created a host of new challenges in the home and in the workplace. Foremost among these is how to give children the love and attention they need when both parents, simultaneously, must cope with the demands of their jobs.

Social problems, economic challenges, new strains on the family: taken together, these developments have produced a heightened sense of urgency about the problems facing American youth and the need for answers. They have also encouraged, among some, the notion that America's youth are more vulnerable and beseiged than ever before.

The American Chicle Youth Poll thus comes at a time when public concern about American youth and its future is high and rising. And unlike most other studies of these issues—whether in academia, in the press, or in the realm of public opinion—this ground-breaking study talks to young Americans themselves about their hopes and worries, their families and schools, their attitudes and opinions. The American Chicle Youth Poll sheds an entirely new light on the problems and prospects of America's children.

INTRODUCTION

This report begins by presenting the Highlights of the study, which synthesize the study's most important findings. The Major Findings section then presents the in-depth results and commentary, with supporting charts and tables. This section is divided into four chapters:

Chapter 1: The General Mood Of American Youth looks at how satisfied America's young people generally are with their home lives, their school lives, and their overall personal situation. It also explores their major concerns in a broader national context, and their expectations for the future.

Chapter 2: American Youth Appraise Their Families examines in detail young people's relations with their parents and their siblings. It evaluates the "problem areas" in home life and suggests possible ways to improve them. It discusses how children perceive their parents' performance in guiding them through their lives, and takes a closer look at the impact of working mothers on children's livelihood.

Chapter 3: American Youth Grade Their Schools looks at students' evaluations of the important subjects to be studied, how well their schools are providing the basic elements of education, where improvements could be made. It also reveals students' aspirations once they graduate from high school.

Chapter 4: Between Home And School—American Youth Vote On Social Issues discusses some of the more sensitive problems confronting American society today, from young peoples' points of view. Substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, AIDS, public school prayer, busing and other issues are voted upon by youth.

This study is based on face-to-face interviews conducted in the homes of respondents in mid-November 1986, with a representative nationwide sample of 1000 8 to 17 year-olds. Technical details and a description of the exact methodology can be found in the appendix. Exact question wording and the context in which questions were asked can be seen in the questionnaire, which also appears at the back of the report.

Highlights

The American Chicle Youth Poll

The Roper Organization Inc.

HIGHLIGHTS

In the context of high and rising public concern about "youth issues," as discussed in the Introduction, the American Chicle Youth Poll explores the attitudes of American youths themselves toward these very same issues. It is the first comprehensive effort to understand the opinions of those concerned—young people—rather than just the issues themselves. As will be seen throughout this report, the perspectives of young people —which are sometimes different from the views of adult Americans— provide solid grounds for hope and optimism about the future.

The General Mood Of American Youth

Refreshingly, one of the most significant findings of the American Chicle Youth Poll is that American youth today do not share the sense of panic that characterizes the opinions of so many adults when it comes to "youth issues." Young people identify certain problems in their families and in their education, to be sure, and they do see room for improvements. But they do not perceive the impending crises in their homes and schools that so many adult analysts have predicted.

To the contrary, the general message being broadcast by the overwhelming majority of American youth is one of satisfaction. By and large, the picture is a happy one. It portrays a fundamental contentment of youth with their personal lives, their family lives, their school lives.

"The general message being broadcast by the overwhelming majority of American youth is one of satisfaction...."

Now, it may be argued that this finding is little more than a portrait of youthful innocence. Respondents between the ages of 8 and 17, after all, cannot be said to have an especially broad perspective. And there is, perhaps, a natural tendency among young people of this age to refuse to admit—or maybe they fail to appreciate—that things may actually be worse than they appear.

But at the same time, is it not possible that American youth can speak with a candor that adults too easily dismiss as naive? That the hope and optimism of the young—even if real—seem unbelievable in an adult world filled with crime, terrorism, and all the anxieties of the modern age?

The general satisfaction of the young is not an uncritical or unworried contentment. Youth do display an awareness of the larger social and national problems around them, and they voice concern about a wide variety of them. The kidnapping of children, AIDS, nuclear war: these and other problems are very much on the minds of young people today.

Yet still, the general picture for the personal lives of the young is not at all a grim one. The American Chicle Youth Poll, in fact, documents an extremely important truth about youth issues that has long been understood concerning the opinions of adults on other matters. That

HIGHLIGHTS

is, problems "out there" in society at large are always perceived as more grave and more intractable than people's personal problems.

For instance, adults are typically optimistic about their own lives even as they express deep concern about the way the nation is heading or about the multitude of problems facing our society. To take another example, crime is thought to be rampant in the nation at large, although very few people say it is much of a problem in their own neighborhood.

The same phenomenon, it would appear, is at work when it comes to youth issues. Adults believe that the problems "out there" among youth are extremely serious. Youth, however, are much more optimistic and confident about their own situations. This is the natural difference that arises when people are asked about themselves as opposed to being asked about others.

The American Chicle Youth Poll thus shows that America's youth are, by and large, happy and well-adjusted. While certain groups of youngsters may be less content than others, and while the dimensions of certain social problems are revealed in the findings, it would be a mistake to conclude that these signs of troubles portend a general malaise afflicting the young. The evidence, instead, points in the opposite direction.

Philosophers have long debated the meaning of happiness, and they have yet to find one. But whatever happiness may be, American youth appear to have it.

American Youth Appraise Their Families

Nowhere is the basic satisfaction of American youth more evident than in their family lives. Fully 90% say they are happy at home, and this extremely high percentage holds true for virtually all groups—children and teenagers, boys and girls, blacks and whites.

It is significant that the nature of the family structure has relatively little influence on the level of contentment. Indeed, of the young children and teenagers interviewed for the American Chicle Youth Poll, three-quarters have mothers who work. The stability of the "traditional" single wage-earner family, which most of these youths have never known, is apparently not much of a factor in young people's fundamental psychological disposition.

But there are two factors, often interrelated, that would appear to dampen the natural hopefulness of youth. The first is divorce; the second, poverty. As we shall see throughout the course of this study, youth from broken homes and from poor ones display more frustration and resentment than others.

HIGHLIGHTS

In general, young people believe that their parents are doing a good job guiding them through their lives. For a host of things asked about—everything from school grades to hobbies, friends to television—large majorities say their parents place the right amount of emphasis on them. No doubt this positive appraisal of parents' performance lies behind youths' general contentment with their home lives.

Yet interestingly enough, parents themselves—and the larger adult public—do not agree with young people's assessments here. A 1986 Roper survey of adults found that, when asked the same question, parents fault themselves for placing too *little* emphasis on almost all of these same areas.

"In general, young people believe their parents are doing a good job guiding them through their lives.... Still, the poll provides a clear indication of certain areas in parent-child communications that are in need of attention...."

Here, then, appears to be concrete proof of the divergent views of youths and adults. Perhaps young people are simply expressing a too-easy acceptance of the status quo and an unwillingness to criticize their parents. But it may also be that parents themselves suffer from exaggerated fears about their *own* performance, rather than having objectively—not emotionally—evaluated their children's feelings. Or perhaps it is merely a heightened (and healthy) desire on the part of parents to always "do better," even if youngsters themselves are content.

Still, the American Chicle Youth Poll provides a clear indication of certain areas in parent-child relations that are in need of attention. The poll reveals the dimensions of a "communications gap"—and, in fact, American youth point to better parent-child communications as a primary way to improve their home lives. It is not so much, if at all, that parents are doing a poor job with their children. Rather, American youth think that there is perhaps not quite enough discussion about perpetually difficult or sensitive topics—their relationship with their parents, about their problems, and about their privacy.

The desire for improved parent-child communications, however, must be viewed in the larger context of satisfaction with day-to-day family life. For instance, the issue is not so much the amount of time spent with parents (except, to some extent, for children of divorced parents). Nor is it really the enjoyment that children derive from the time spent with their parents (except, again, for children with experience of divorce). In both cases, vast majorities report they are content with their present family habits.

Instead, there is some discomfort concerning specific areas of discussion. Sex and dating, in particular, are areas where the desire for better communications is most pronounced. Delicate subjects such as these have long posed difficulties for both parents and young people. Youths would also like a more open relationship in talking about issues of

HIGHLIGHTS

personal privacy, although this desire in itself reflects the tensions that young people may feel as they seek to simultaneously be close to their parents and establish a sense of independence.

"Improving relations with siblings tops the list of priorities for improving family life...."

Another clue to youth's desire for better communications with parents might have little to do with parents at all. Instead, it concerns relations with brothers and sisters—the old story of sibling rivalry. Improving relations with siblings, in fact, tops the list of priorities for improving family life. But perhaps young people feel inherently uncomfortable talking with their parents about problems with brothers and sisters—either out of fear of being labeled a "tattletale," or maybe because parents generally treat all of their children rather equally.

One thing seems certain, however: sibling rivalry recedes with advancing age, only to be replaced by a new concern—the quest for greater independence. In that awkward period of adolescence, the attention of teenagers shifts from strains with their siblings to establishing a new role in the family for themselves. Younger brothers and sisters are no longer rivals; they become reponsibilities. And this too can be a delicate matter to discuss with parents.

Especially working parents. In evaluating the impact of a mother's work outside the home on the quality of family life, American youth reveal some striking differences of opinion depending on their age. Teenagers, for instance, believe that young children (12 or less) suffer when mothers work. Their younger siblings, however, do not agree; they think that a mother's work outside the home has no real effect on children their age. But the basic sentiment of *all* ages, teenagers and children alike, is that teenagers are not affected by mothers working outside the home.

"The overall verdict on working mothers is a favorable one...."

The overall verdict on working mothers, from the children's perspective, is a favorable one. When confronted by the choice of having a mother who works outside the home *or* one who stays home and takes care of the family, American youth vote convincingly (59% to 34%) for an employed mother. This is an even larger margin than among adult women themselves, who in a 1985 Roper survey opted—for the first time ever—for work over home (by a 51% to 45% vote).

So, somewhat remarkably, today's youth are well in tune with this major social trend: the fast-rising number of working women. They are resolutely the products of the modern two-income family. And far from being ravaged by this enormous social transformation, American youth are supportive of it—and happy at the same time.

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American Youth Grade Their Schools

Echoing their general contentment with their home lives, American youth give positive ratings to their schools and the quality of education they receive. Vast majorities of both children and teenagers say that they feel personally good at school, that they like their schools, and that they are satisfied with them. Both teachers and parents receive high marks for the appropriateness of their expectations from students.

And when looking at specific elements of their education—learning the basic skills, preparing for college or a job, becoming a good citizen—students also express high levels of satisfaction. The one thing that falls well short of the ideal is a timeworn complaint of many a student: the cafeteria food.

When asked which of the many aspects of their school day is the most important—the subjects they learn, the friends they make, the extra-curricular activities, learning to get along with others—today's students see the subjects they learn as being the most important thing about school.

All told, American students give the American school system a solid "B" for the overall quality of education and the learning environment it provides. While this may be a lower grade than many parents would hope for, it nevertheless hardly manifests a failure of our schools, as many critics and professional pessimists have charged.

"All told, students give the American school system a solid "B" for the overall quality of education...."

Yet a "B" grade certainly leaves room for improvement. Where should efforts be focused? The most important area concerns the infrastructure of the school system: the need for more modern equipment, such as computers, VCRs, and other technologies.

Another area that could stand some improvement, according to students, is attention to the basics—reading, writing, and arithmetic. But is this not a contradiction, since, earlier, they expressed general satisfaction with their schools' approach? Probably not. Instead, it more likely reflects—and reinforces—students' fundamental belief that the basics are crucial to their future. They can never learn, in a word, enough about the basics.

The very definition of the basics, however, could change in the future. Although mathematics, reading, and grammar top the list of important subjects to be studied, a relative newcomer ranks very high as well: computer skills. Teenagers, for instance, place computer skills third on their list of educational priorities, just after English. And younger children, too, affirm the need to be not just literate and numerate but also "computerate," ranking computer skills fourth on their list of important subjects (just behind science).

HIGHLIGHTS

"Students are calling for more and better technology in their schools...."

Perhaps this is why students are calling for more and better technology in their schools. They realize that success in our economy increasingly depends on knowledge and usage of high technology tools.

American youth point to two other areas concerning their education that might stand some improvement. The first concerns parental involvement. Significant numbers say that more attention from parents to what students are learning and what the schools are teaching would help improve the overall quality of education. In part, this desire might simply express a vote of confidence in their parents' judgment. Or maybe it is another indication of the time pressures on parents from two-income households, who have less energy to devote to PTA meetings.

Second, there is some disgruntlement on the part of students about unqualified peers being promoted to the next grade. About a third believe this happens at least some of the time in their schools; 1 in 10 think it happens frequently. This is not so much a question of lax individual discipline imposed by schools on their students; most youth think the current level of discipline is appropriate. Instead, this feeling that some students are being promoted when they do not deserve to be implies a lack of *institutional* discipline—that schools themselves may not be rigorous enough in establishing and applying their own standards.

All these problems notwithstanding, however, American youth cast a vote of confidence in our school system. Rather than being demoralized by shortcomings of the educational system, they voice a fundamental satisfaction tempered by calls for constructive change. They understand the vital importance of obtaining a high quality education, and believe that our schools—despite certain obstacles—are doing well in providing it.

Perhaps this appreciation, rather than rejection, of the educational system is best illustrated by their intentions once they graduate from high school. Fully 80% of today's young people expect to attend college. If, indeed, they all fulfill this desire, their generation would be by far the best-educated in American history. Right now, less than half of the adult population has college experience.

School, it would seem, cannot be so bad after all.

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Between Home And School: American Youth Vote On Social Issues

Between the happiness of the home life and the general satisfaction with the school system lies a more controversial world—the world of drugs and alcohol, of sexual activity, of crime. It is a world that many, if not most, youth are exposed to among their peers. And it is a perpetual cause of concern, if not alarm, to many if not most adults.

How extensive are these controversial and, sometimes, illicit activities? Vast majorities of teenagers say that "at least some" smoking, drinking, sexual activity, crime, drug abuse, and marijuana use takes place among their peers. Substantial numbers assert that "a lot" of smoking, drinking, and sex goes on.

A strikingly high 43% say that teenage pregnancy occurs at least sometimes—demonstrating a widespread exposure to this sensitive problem. Fewer—but still disturbingly high numbers—say that cocaine and crack are used sometimes.

Although sharply reduced numbers of youth believe that "a lot" of the worst activities—crime, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy—happen among their peers, the proportions are nevertheless high enough to warrant serious concern. Indeed, there ideally should be none of these activities at all.

"Vast majorities of teenagers say that 'at least some' smoking, drinking, sex, crime, drug abuse, and marijuana use takes place among their peers...."

But what is to be done to improve the situation? American youth point to two varieties of solutions: enforcement and education.

Although most teenagers think that discipline in their schools generally is adequate, they nevertheless support certain specific enforcement measures that could lead to less substance abuse and less crime. Majorities favor giving schools the authority to search students' lockers and personal possessions for drugs, liquor, and weapons.

Educational steps that could be taken include courses on the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse, and sex education classes. Roughly half of all students say their schools offer courses on drug and alcohol abuse, and the overwhelming weight of opinion is that these classes are good.

Concerning sex education, opinion is that "the facts of life" should be taught both in the home and in the school. 6 in 10 think sex education is a matter for the home; an almost equal number also say it should be taught in schools. About a third of all teenagers say their schools provide such courses today, with the general verdict—as for the drug and alcohol courses—being quite favorable.

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So in these areas of personal behavior, it would appear that the anxieties of adults are not misplaced. Teenagers, at least on the surface, support greater vigilance and better education. But for some of these concerns—smoking, drinking, and sexual activity—the borderline between improper behavior and the desires for social acceptance and personal independence is probably a fine one.

Other social issues that are often at the center of adults' debate over youth include school prayer, busing, the admission of AIDS victims to public schools, and the right of homosexuals to teach in the schools. The American Chicle Youth Poll provides one of the first insights into young people's views on these delicate subjects, and finds that the most divisive issue is the admission of AIDS victims. Opinion here is evenly split—reflecting the enormous tension, and confusion, in society at large about this tragic condition. By a relatively narrow margin, American youth would permit homosexuals to teach in the public schools. And by virtually the same margin, students oppose having prayers required every day—although few of them have objections to a moment of silence being observed.

"Like their elders, American youth, too, are troubled by broader social problems...."

Young people's views are less ambivalent when it comes to busing. Despite the inconvenience that busing might cause, a resounding two-thirds majority support busing in order to achieve racial integration. There is, moreover, a surprising unanimity of opinion on this matter, which suggests that busing is not really a polarizing issue among youth.

In sum, American youth, too, are troubled by broader social problems. Like their elders, they often voice conflicting opinions on the best solutions to them. They are, in many senses, a reflection of the society around them. And when looking at these controversies and issues in the larger society, it is perhaps here that young people and adults think most closely alike.

Chapter One:

The General Mood Of American Youth

The American Chicle Youth Poll

The Roper Organization Inc.

1

The General Mood Of American Youth

In an effort to set an overall context for understanding young people's attitudes and opinions toward the broad range of topics which were explored in this survey, this section looks at the general mood of today's youth.

The picture which emerges is one of general satisfaction with the places where they live, the schools which they attend, and their lives at home. Of course, there is always room for improvement, and each of these aspects of life is explored in greater depth in subsequent chapters of this report. But the overall message is that children are generally content with their lives.

More specifically, the overwhelming majority of youngsters say that they can feel good about basic elements of their lives -- family, friends, and most of all, being an American.

We live in a troubling world, however, and America's children express concern about a variety of things. Primary among these is the very real threat posed by the kidnapping of children and teenagers. Majorities are also very concerned about the possibility of nuclear war, the spread of AIDS and drug use by professional athletes.

Overall Satisfaction With Life

Most American youngsters like the town or city where they live. Sixty-nine percent say they like it "a lot," and an additional 23% say they like it "a little."

The young children and teenagers we spoke with are also generally satisfied with their lives at home and their schools. Nine out of ten (90%) say their home life is happy, and almost as many (84%) say they are satisfied with the school they attend. (Home life and school are the focus of in depth discussion in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively.)

This overall pattern holds for all subgroups, with small degrees of difference, as follows:

Older teens (15 to 17 years old) and black youths are both somewhat less happy than the total sample with: the town/city where they live (57% of older teens and 60% of blacks like it a lot, compared with 69% among the total); and their school (79% of older teens and 74% of blacks are satisfied, compared with 84% among the total).

As might be expected, children who have been through a divorce are less likely to say they are happy with their home life (83%) than children who have not been through a divorce (93%). (The impact of divorce and its impact on children's outlook toward their family and home life is explored more fully in Chapter 2.)

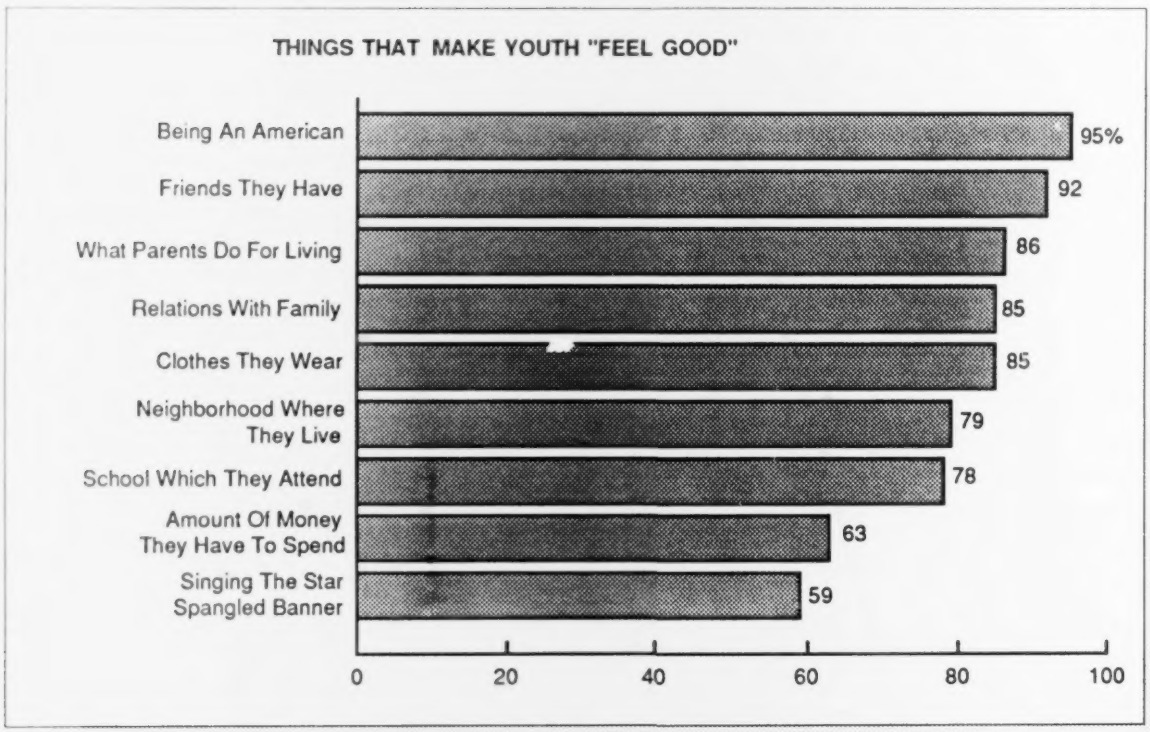
1

Feeling Good

Which aspects of their lives give youngsters satisfaction and pride? First and foremost, being an American makes them feel good (95%). This is followed by the friends they have (92%) and elements relating to their families -- what their parents do for a living (86%) and the way they get along with their family (85%).

In a fashion conscious country, 85% also say that they feel good about the clothes they have. Almost 8 in 10 feel this way about the neighborhood where they live (79%) and the school which they attend (78%).

One aspect of their lives about which young people are somewhat less satisfied puts them in company with most adults -- the amount of money which they have to spend (63%). And, while we just saw that being an American makes 95% of youngsters feel good, many fewer (59%) feel this way about singing the *Star Spangled Banner*.



1

Matters Of Concern

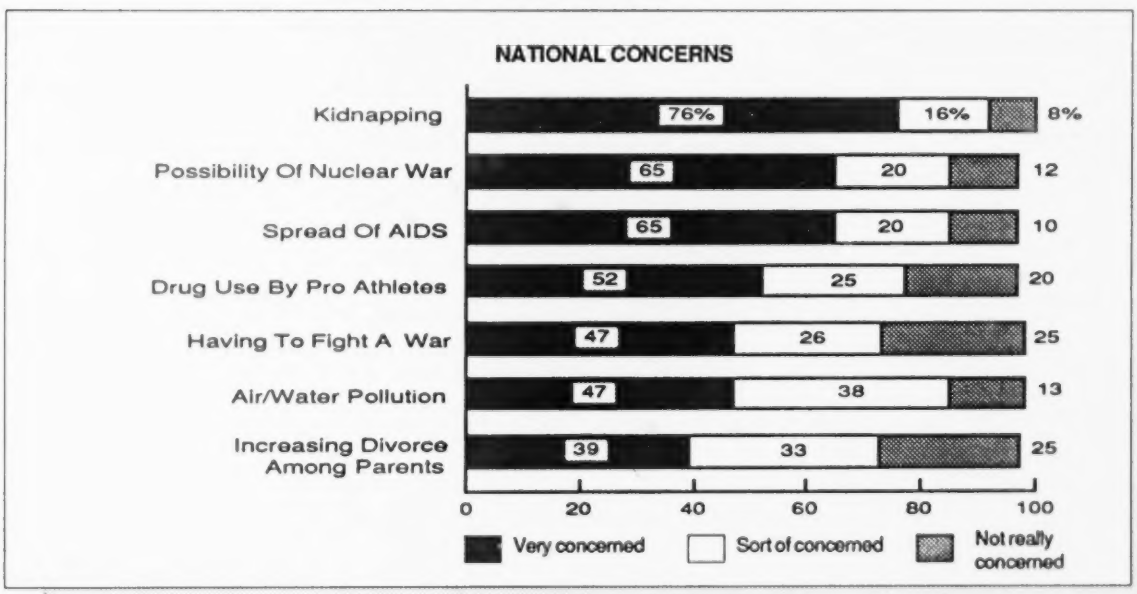
Like their parents and other adults, young people are attuned to the myriad of problems which surround them and many are matters of personal concern.

Topping the list is the kidnapping of children and teenagers, a problem which strikes a note of concern among three quarters (76%) of the youngsters we interviewed. Girls, in particular, express concern about this problem (84% say they are very concerned, against 68% for boys).

About two-thirds of the sample are also personally concerned about the possibility of nuclear war and the spread of AIDS (both are mentioned by 65%). These are each of somewhat greater concern to teenagers (68% of whom are very concerned about nuclear war and 72% about AIDS) than to younger children (61% and 58%, respectively).

More than half --52%-- say they are very concerned about the use of drugs by professional athletes, many of whom are thought to be role models for our nation's youth. Here, boys are somewhat more concerned than girls (55% to 48%) and young children are somewhat more concerned than teenagers (55% vs. 48%).

Matters of slightly less concern (to 47% each) are the possibility that they may someday have to fight in a war and air and water pollution. And at the bottom of the list of personal concerns -- cited by 39%-- is the increasing number of divorces among parents. Surprisingly, this is of no greater concern to children whose parents have been divorced (41%) than those whose have not (38%).



Chapter Two:

American Youth Appraise Their Families

The American Chicle Youth Poll

The Roper Organization Inc.

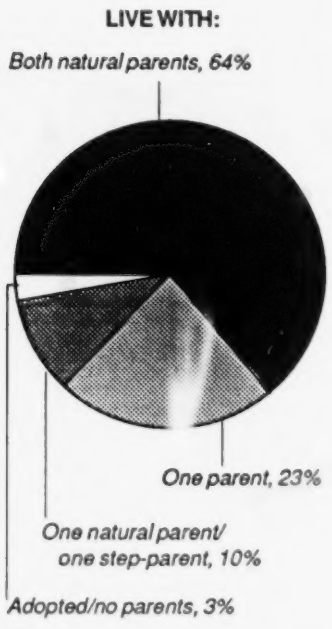
2

Home And Family: A Demographic Profile

In the past two decades, our society has witnessed dramatic changes in attitudes and behavior regarding marriage and divorce, the organization of family life, child rearing practices, and other aspects of family and home life. Many of these are evident here. This section presents a basic profile of the households of today's youth—the presence (or absence) of parents, siblings, and grandparents, and the incidence of working mothers. This is the backdrop against which subsequent sections will explore the attitudes and opinions which children hold about family and home life.

Parents

The shift away from the traditional family structure and the growing acceptability of divorce can be seen clearly in the fact that fewer than two-thirds of the youngsters surveyed (64%) live with both of their natural parents. About 1 in 4 (23%) live with only one parent, while 1 in 10 (10%) live with one natural parent and one step-parent. Fully one-quarter of the families (25%) have been through a divorce.



Children from low income households* are the most likely to live with one parent (42%). They are also the most likely to have been through a divorce (36%).

Black children are more likely than white children to live in single parent households (34% versus 21%). The difference here, however, is not attributable to divorce or the death of a parent, as the number of black children who have been through a divorce or have a deceased parent is the same as for whites. Rather, 14% of black children (compared to only 2% among whites) say that neither divorce nor the death of a parent is the reason why they live with only one parent.

In total, 91% of the survey respondents live with their mothers, while 69% live with their fathers. This breaks down as follows:

64% live with both biological parents.
19% live with their mother only.
8% live with their mother and a step-father.
3% live with their father only
2% live with their father and a step-mother.
The remaining youngsters live with neither of their parents (2%), are adopted (1%), or did not answer the question (1%).

** Note: Household income was not measured as part of the interview process, since many youngsters do not know their household income. Instead, interviewers were given detailed instructions on how to classify respondents into one of four socioeconomic categories—upper, upper-middle, lower-middle, or lower—based on visual inspection and familiarity with the neighborhood.*

2

Working Mothers

Almost three-quarters of youths in our poll have working mothers; about half (46%) have mothers who work full-time, while the mothers of a quarter (25%) work part-time.

Across all demographic groups, a majority have working mothers. However, there are certain notable (although in most instances not surprising) differences, particularly with respect to whether mothers work full-time or part-time.

The percentage of mothers working full-time increases as children get older. Only a 40% minority of 8 to 10 year old children have mothers who work full-time; this increases to a 52% majority among the 15 to 17 year old group.

The likelihood that a child's mother will work full-time decreases as family size grows. Only 32% of children with 4 or more siblings have full-time working mothers, compared with 53% among those who have either one or no siblings.

Black children are more likely than white children (55% to 43%) to have mothers who work full-time.

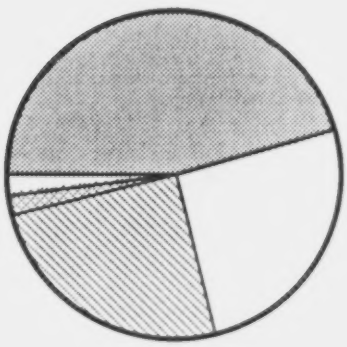
Children who live with only one natural parent are far more likely than those who live with both natural parents (59% to 40%) to have mothers who work full-time.

Southern children have the highest percentage of mothers who work full-time (51%); children from the Northeast, have the lowest percentage (34%).

And finally, while it may be somewhat of a tautology, children from lower income households have the lowest percentage of mothers who work full-time (36%) and the highest percentage of mothers who do not work at all (33%).

The complex set of attitudes which children have toward working mothers are examined in depth later in this chapter.

WORKING MOTHERS



LEGEND:	
Mother Works Full-time	*46%*
Mother Works Part-time	*25*
Doesn't Work At All	*26*
No Mother	*2*
Don't Know	*2*

WHETHER MOTHER WORKS OUTSIDE THE HOME
(By Demographic Groups)

	Works Full-time	*Works Part-time*	*Doesn't work*
Total	46%	25%	26%
Sex			
Male	45	24	27
Female	47	26	25
Age			
8-12 (net)	41	27	28
8-10	40	27	29
11,12	43	28	27
13-17 (net)	50	23	23
13,14	47	25	24
15-17	52	23	23
Race			
White	43	27	27
Black	55	22	17
Socioeconomic status			
Upper/upper middle	47	27	24
Lower middle	48	24	24
Lower	36	22	33
Region			
Northeast	34	37	24
Midwest	49	24	26
South	51	20	27
West	46	22	25
Been through divorce			
Yes	61	19	16
No	41	27	29
Live with:			
Both natural parents	40	28	30
One parent/one step-parent	53	24	23
One parent	59	19	15
Number of siblings			
None or one	53	27	19
Two or three	45	26	26
Four or more	32	23	41

Siblings

On average, the youngsters in our poll have 1.1 brothers and 1.0 sisters.

About a third (31%) have no brothers, 4 in 10 (41%) have one brother, 17% have two brothers, and 12% have three or more brothers.

A similar distribution is found for sisters: a third (35%) have no sisters, 38% have one sister, 18% have two sisters, and 9% have three or more sisters.

Fewer than 1 in 10 (8%) have no siblings.

Grandparents

With an average of 2.75 grandparents each, almost all (95%) of the youths we surveyed have at least one living grandparent.

One in 10 (11%) have one living grandparent.
One in four (23%) have two living grandparents.
One in four (26%) have three living grandparents.
One in four (26%) have four living grandparents.

One in 12 (8%) claim to have five or more living grandparents. This may reflect "step-grandparents" as a result of either the presence of a step-parent's parents, or grandparents who have remarried following a divorce.

The role of grandparents in these children's lives is explored more fully at the end of this chapter.

2

Overall Happiness With Family And Home Life

Overall happiness with home life is very high. While this percentage is generally uniform across the board, there are two groups of children who stand out as being somewhat less happy than others: those who have been through a divorce and those from lower class homes.

The children we surveyed are happiest about the amount of love which they receive from their parents and the size of their families. They are somewhat less happy, however, with the amount of time their parents spend with them. They express the least amount of happiness with two aspects of their lives which are typically areas of discontent among children -- the amount of work they have to do around the house and relations with their brothers and sisters.

Overall happiness with home life is quite high, with 90% saying that they are generally happy with their home life. This broad measure of satisfaction closely parallels the results of recent national surveys of the adult population about their satisfaction with family life.

Happiness is equally high among boys and girls, younger children and teenagers, and children of mothers who work and those whose don't. There is relative uniformity, as well, across all regions of the country.

However, some of the effects of divorce can be seen in the fact that 93% of those who have not been through a divorce say they are happy with their home life, compared to 83% among those whose parents are divorced.

Some of the effects of poverty are also evident. Ninety-three percent of the children from upper and upper-middle class homes, as well as those from lower-middle class homes, say they are happy; only 81% from lower class homes agree.

More specifically, the thing which the most children say they are happy about is the amount of love which their parents show them. Fully 93% feel this way.

This figure drops for children of lower income households (79%).

Interestingly enough, there is no difference here between children whose parents are divorced (93%) and those whose are not (94%). This could mean that divorced parents have been successful in conveying to children that they are loved despite parental discord, or that children are reluctant to express insecurities that they may have that their parents' divorce meant lack of love for them.

Most children (91%) -- across all demographic groups and all family sizes -- are also happy with the size of their family.

2

While they are happy with the amount of love they receive, however, children are somewhat less happy with the amount of time which their parents spend with them (79%).

There are differences here between children who have been through a divorce (73%) and those who have not (81%). And differences, as well, between children from lower income homes (69%) and those from lower-middle (81%) or upper/upper-middle income households (80%).

Household chores have traditionally been the bane of many children's existence (or at least, so they say). We find that three-quarters of the children we surveyed say they are happy with the amount of work they have to do around the house, while 17% are unhappy.

Children from the Midwest and West are far more happy to work around the house (79% each) than children from the Northeast (67%). Southerners fall in-between (74%).

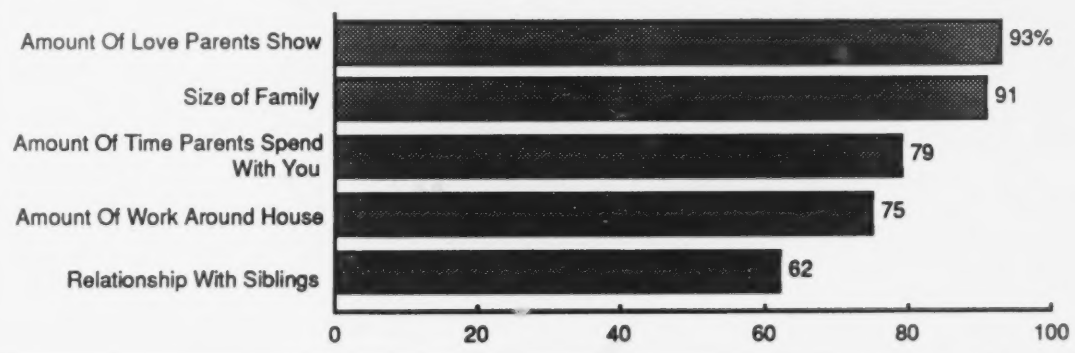
Also, black youngsters are less happy with this aspect of their lives than white youngsters (59% vs. 77%).

And children from low income homes are once again less happy (53%) than those from lower-middle income homes (73%) or upper/upper-middle income homes (82%).

The aspect of home life about which children are the least happy is their relations with their brothers and sisters, with 62% saying they are happy and 21% saying they are not happy.

The data suggest, though, that this is a function of age and maturity. Seventy percent among teenagers (and 74% among 15 to 17 year olds) say they are happy with the way they get along with their siblings, compared to only 54% among the 8 to 12 age group.

HAPPINESS WITH SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF HOME LIFE



2

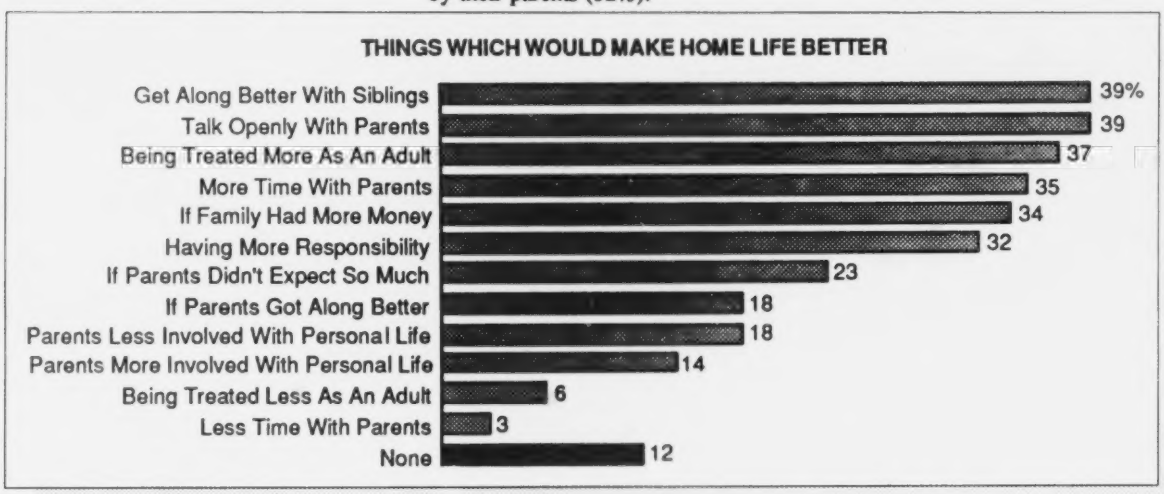
Improving Home Life

As seen in the last section, American youth are generally happy with the quality of their home life. However, certain elements were seen to be better than others. This section explores children's agendas for improving their home life.

Topping the list are better relations with their siblings (the aspect of their home life with which children said they are the least happy) and more open communications with their parents. In addition, children feel that their home life would be better if: they were treated more as adults by their parents and given more responsibility for things; they could spend more time with their parents; and if their families had more money.

When looked at by age, some interesting differences in priorities emerge. For younger children (between the ages of 8 and 12), better sibling relations, more time with parents and more open communications with parents stand out as the most important ingredients for a better home life. For teenagers, open communications and better sibling relations are also important, but the top priority is to be treated more as an adult. Spending more time with their parents is less important to teenagers than to younger children.

Better relations with their brothers and sisters and being able to talk openly with their parents about things which are important to them are the two top priorities of America's youth for making home life better. Both are cited by nearly 4 in 10 respondents. These are followed closely by four addtional ingredients -- being treated more as an adult by their parents (37%), spending more time with their parents (35%), families having more money (34%), and having more responsibility given to them by their parents (32%).



While this is the overall agenda, somewhat different priorities are found for younger children than for teenagers.

For younger children, getting along better with their brothers and sisters is the number one thing which would make home life better, cited by 43%. This is in keeping with the earlier finding which showed that for younger children, in particular, sibling relations are the aspect of home life about which they are least satisfied.

Beyond this, two additional items stand out as important to younger children -- spending more time with their parents (39%) and being able to talk openly with their parents about things which are important to them (37%).

More family money (33%), more responsibility (31%) and being treated more as an adult (29%) are also important to this group, but less so relative to the three items mentioned above. However, the latter two items —having more responsibility and being treated more as an adult—are each more important to 11 and 12 year olds than to 8-10 year olds (38% vs. 27% and 36% vs. 24%, respectively).

For teenagers, a somewhat different picture emerges. For this group, the number one ingredient for improving home life is to be treated more as an adult (44%). Being able to talk openly with their parents is also an important priority (40%).

Better sibling relations (the number one priority for younger children) begins to drop in importance as children get older. This is cited by only 36% of teens as a whole, and by even fewer 15 to 17 year olds (31%) than younger teens (43%).

Having more family money (35%) and being given more responsibility for things (33%) are about the same in importance for teenagers as for younger children. Spending more time with their parents, however, is of considerably less importance to teens (30%), than to 8 to 12 year olds (39%).

Two additional differences between teenagers and younger children are found. They are important to note because they reveal certain conflicting values which emerge with age. On the one hand, teenagers say that the number one ingredient for improving home life is to be treated more as an adult, and that more responsibility is also important. Yet, 28% among this group (compared to only 18% among younger children) say that their home life would also be better if their parents didn't expect so much of them. These would appear to be contradictory desires, except that "being treated as an adult" may be a plea for more personal freedom, while what is "expected of them" may be school performance and household chores.

Similarly, teens say that more open communications with their parents is a high priority. Yet, 22% (compared with only 14% among younger children) say that home life would be better if their parents were less involved with their personal lives. Again -- "talk to me, but let me do as I please."

Teenagers appear to be sending a message to their parents to find the delicate balance between responsibility and privileges of adulthood, on the one hand, and unrealistic expectations on the other; between open communication and the need for privacy.

Beyond the difference between younger children and teenagers, the following are also of note:

For black children and children from low-income homes, all of the ingredients for a better home life take a back seat to more family money (cited by 50% and 54%, respectively, among those two groups). Certain items are also relatively more important for children who have been through a divorce than for those who have not:

Being treated more as an adult (43% vs. 35%).
Having more family money (41% vs. 32%).
Spending more time with their parents (40% vs. 33%).
If their parents got along better (29% vs. 15%).

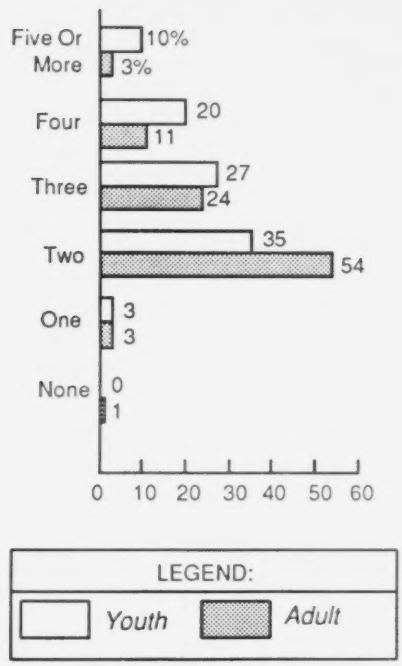
2

The Ideal Family Size

Surveys among American adults find that attitudes toward the ideal family size have been undergoing a dramatic shift in recent years. In four decades -- two generations -- the desired size of the ideal family has shrunk by one-third. A 1985 Roper survey found that the majority of U.S. adults feel the ideal family size now consists of one or two children.

The American Chicle Youth Poll, however, finds that children have a different perspective from adults, favoring a larger number of children. The majority feel that three or more is the ideal number and only a minority agree with the adults that two or fewer is ideal.

IDEAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN
(Youth vs. Adult Perspective)*



* Data from the *1985 Virginia Slims American Women's Opinion*, conducted by The Roper Organization.

The respondents in the survey have an average of 3.1 children in their family -- 1.1 brothers, 1.0 sisters, plus themselves. When asked what they think is the *ideal* number of children for a family to have, their answers parallel closely their current family size.

About 4 in 10 respondents (38%) feel that, one or two children would make an ideal family. Nearly 6 in 10 feel that the ideal family is larger -- 27% say it should consist of three children, 20% say four, and 10% say five or more.

Children's attitudes toward ideal family size do not vary by sex, race, or the region of the country where they live. Nor does the experience of having been through a divorce have an effect. However, there are some differences based on the age of the repondent and the employment status of the child's mother. The biggest differences are seen, not surprisingly, when responses are broken out by current family size.

Older respondents feel the ideal family is somewhat smaller in size than younger respondents. Among teenagers more than 4 in 10 (42%) feel the ideal family consists of two children or less, compared to a third (34%) among those aged 8-12 years.

Similarly, children whose mothers work feel that the ideal family size is smaller than those whose mothers do not work. In households where there the mother works full-time, 43% feel that two children or fewer is ideal. This figure drops to 31% in households where the mother is not employed.

The biggest differences among any demographic subgroups are seen when the ideal family size is analyzed on the basis of current family size. Among children with only one or no siblings, a 57% majority say that two or fewer children is ideal. As current family size increases, however, so do perceptions of the ideal family size.

2

Families Spending Time Together

In an earlier section we reported that virtually all American youth say they are happy with the amount of love *their parents show them; somewhat fewer, however, were reported to be happy with the amount of* time *they spend with their families.*

This section explores the issue of spending time together in greater depth, and finds a generally positive picture. This is tempered, however, by some areas of concern. On the one hand, most children say they spend the right amount of time with their parents. And even more importantly, most say the time they spend with their families are times which they enjoy a lot. Thus, children appear to be saying that they are generally satisfied with both the quantity and quality of the time they spend with their families.

On the other hand, however, the data suggest that children are not totally content, and more than a third feel that their lives would be better if they could spend more time with their families.

Furthermore, two subgroups show particular strains when it comes to spending time with their family -- children who have been through a divorce in the family and children from lower income households.

As reported in Chapter One, nearly 8 in 10 children (79%) say they are happy about the amount of time their parents spend with them. Even more (93%) say they are happy with the amount of love which their parents show them.

Looking at this issue in greater depth, we find that the majority of children (74%) feel that they spend the right amount of time with their families. Slightly more than a fifth (22%), however, say that their family spends too little time together; only 3% say they spend too much time together.

Perhaps even more importantly, children enjoy the times they spend with their family. Nearly 8 in 10 (78%) say that regardless of how much time they spend with their families, the times they spend together are times which they enjoy a lot. One in five say they enjoy the times they spend with their families only a little (15%) or not too much (5%).

Taking all of these data as a whole, the survey finds that the vast majority of American children are generally satisfied with both the *quantity* and *quality* of the time they spend with their families.

However, the data are not uniformly even across all groups. In particular, the strains of divorce and poverty on family relations can be seen:

The biggest difference in attitudes is seen among children who have been through a divorce. Fully a third (32%) among this group feel that they and their family spend too little time together, compared with only 1 in 5 (19%) of children who have not been through a divorce. Similarly, 27% of the children who have been through a divorce say they enjoy the time they spend with their family only "a little" or "not too much"; only 17% of the children who have not been through a divorce feel this way.

Children from lower income households do not differ much from other children when it comes to this perception of the amount of time they spend with their families. However, there is a sharp difference in perception when it comes to the *quality* of the time they spend together - 31% of children from lower income homes say they enjoy the times they spend with their families only "a little" or "not too much," compared with 19% among children from households with a higher socioeconomic status.

Even though children say they spend "the right amount of time with their families," there is clear reason to believe that children *would like* to spend more time with their parents. This is evidenced by the fact that, as seen earlier, more than a third (35%) say that spending more time with their parents would make their home life better.

Looking at the attitudes of various subgroups, we find certain differences:

Children who have been through a divorce, in particular, feel that spending more time with their parents would improve their home life (40% vs. 33% among children who have not been through a divorce).

Also, younger children are more likely than teenagers (39% versus 30%) to feel that their home life would improve if they spent more time with their parents.

For children from lower income households, however, spending time with their parents is not enough. Only 29% say this would make their home life better. This group feels strongly that more money is the main ingredient for a better home life.

2

Parental Guidance For Children

Asked about eleven important things that influence children's lives, the majority opinion among American youth is that parents place the proper amount of emphasis on all eleven. However, there are degrees of differences which suggest areas where youths feel their parents place too much *emphasis and where* not enough *emphasis is placed.*

The primary areas where youngsters feel that their parents place too much emphasis include their grades in school and the amount and kind of television they watch. To a lesser degeree, they also feel their parents place too much emphasis on the kinds of friends they have.

The major areas where parents are thought to be placing too little emphasis are in the areas of cultural activities, exercise and extra-curricular activities.

In expressing these opinions, the youngsters we surveyed are considerably at odds with a national sample of adults who were asked the same question in a 1986 Roper poll. Among adults (especially parents with children still living at home), the weight of opinion is that parents do not place enough emphasis in almost all of these areas.

For all eleven areas about which they were asked, a clear majority of young respondents said that their parents place just about the right amount of emphasis. However, when the percentages of those answering too much emphasis and too little emphasis are compared, we see that there are differences in degree which suggest certain areas where youngsters feel their parents are too involved and where they are, perhaps, not quite involved enough.

The primary areas where respondents feel their parents place too much importance are their grades in school (24% say they place too much emphasis, while only 6% say too little emphasis) and the amount of TV they watch (23% say too much emphasis; 8% say too little emphasis). It is interesting that children are less critical of the emphasis their parents place on the *kind* of TV they watch (16% say too much, 9% say too little) than the *amount* of TV.

This perception that parents overemphasize their children's grades in school is more acute among youngsters in the Northeast (34%) than those in other regions of the country (Midwest -- 18%, South -- 22%, West -- 23%). Of all eleven items, grades are the only area where such sharp regional differences are seen.

Grades are also thought to be overemphasized more for teenagers (27%) and 11 and 12 year olds (28%), than for 8 to 10 year olds (15%).

Another area where children feel that parents may be placing

somewhat too much emphasis is on the kinds of friends they have (15% say too much emphasis; 5% say too little emphasis).

Age differences emerge again with respect to friends. Among 8 to 10 year olds, only 8% feel their parents place too much importance on their friends. This perception increases with each successive age group (to 14% among 11 and 12 year olds, 16% among 13 and 14 year olds, and 22% among 15 to 17 year olds).

Turning now to areas where children feel that parents perhaps place too little importance, cultural activities are mentioned most often (with 27% saying their parents place too little emphasis, against only 4% who say they place too much emphasis). Also cited are the amount of exercise they get (23% say too much emphasis; 4% say not enough) and extracurricular activities (20% say too much emphasis; 5% say not enough).

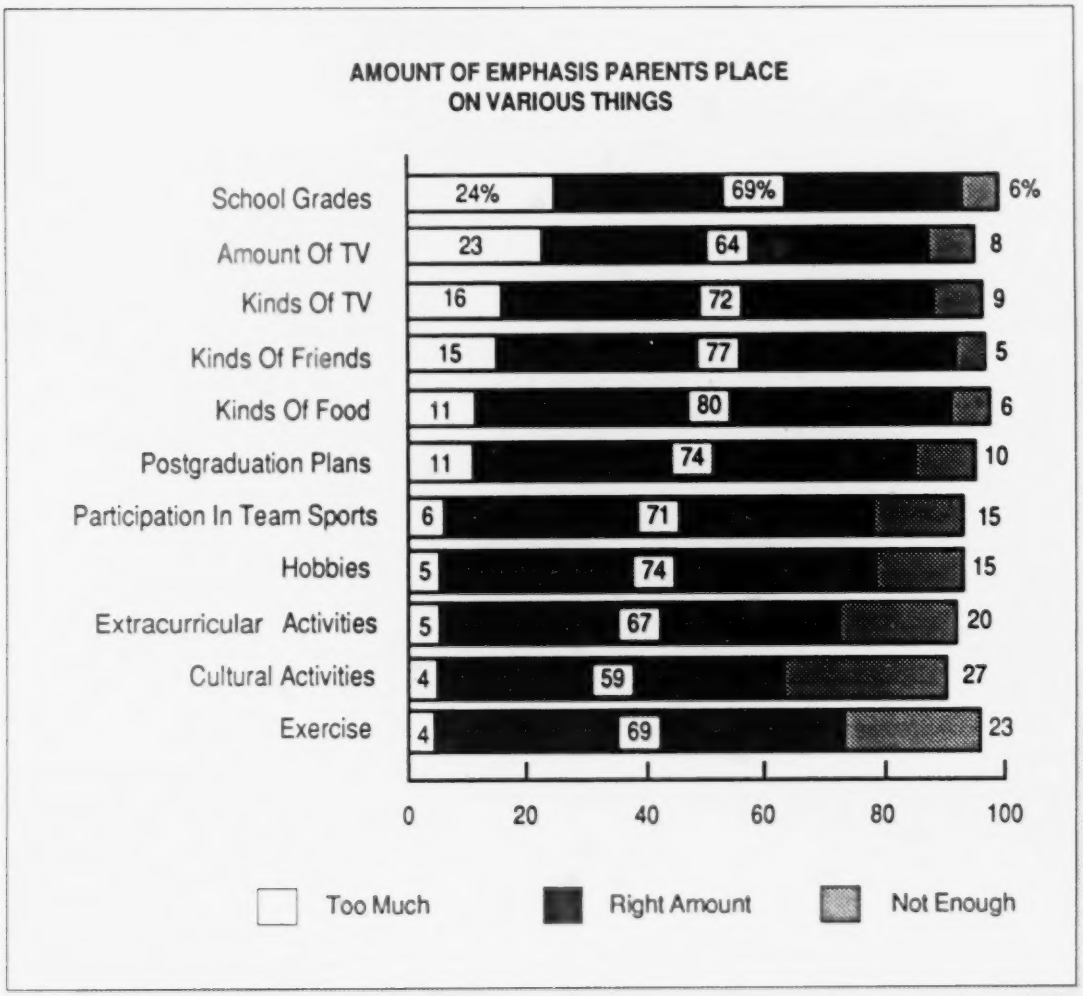
Again, some age differences are found, with teenagers more likely than young children to say that their parents place too little emphasis on cultural activities (31% versus 24% among 8 to 12 year olds).

These attitudes place young Americans at odds with a national sample of adults who were asked nearly the same question in a 1986 Roper poll. Among adults, the weight of opinion is that parents do not place *enough* emphasis on most of these items. This is particularly true when it comes to the amount and kind of television that children watch (65% say there is not enough parental guidance), the foods they eat (61%), cultural activities (59%), exercise (55%), and the kind of friends the children associate with (52%). Pluralities concur that not enough emphasis is placed on school grades (47%), hobbies (45%), and the future careers of the children (41%). The two areas in which adults see parents as doing a good job are extra-curricular activities and participation in team sports (although, here, 33% think there is too much emphasis).

Interestingly enough, parents with children ages 17 years or less are, if anything, somewhat harder on themselves than is the total adult public. For the first eight of these things, they are more likely than others to say that not enough emphasis is given.

Closely related to the question of parental guidance is the question of discipline. Here, a strong 86% majority of youngsters say that the level of discipline in their homes is "about right." Only 8% say the discipline at home is "too strict"; 4% say it is "not strict enough."

2


AMOUNT OF EMPHASIS PARENTS PLACE ON VARIOUS THINGS
School Grades
24%
69%
6%
Amount Of TV
23
64
8
Kinds Of TV
16
72
9
Kinds Of Friends
15
77
5
Kinds Of Food
11
80
6
Postgraduation Plans
11
74
10
Participation In Team Sports
6
71
15
Hobbies
5
74
15
Extracurricular Activities
5
67
20
Cultural Activities
4
59
27
Exercise
4
69
23
0
20
40
60
80
100
Too Much
Right Amount
Not Enough

2

Parent-Child Communications

As seen earlier, children name more open communications with their parents as one of the primary things which would make their home life better. What are the things which kids feel they can and cannot talk comfortably about with their parents?

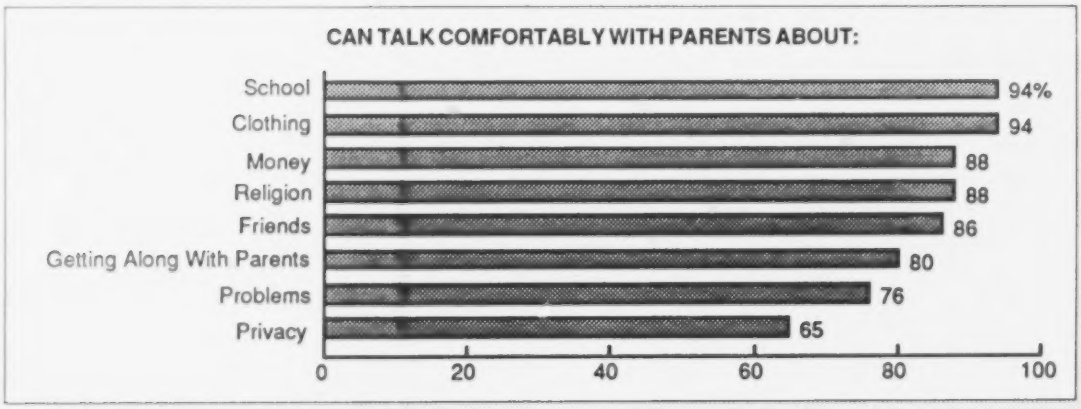
School, clothes, money, religion and friends are all areas where children feel there are open channels of communications. However, communications are less open with respect to some of the more sensitive topics of conversation for children -- their privacy, their problems, and the way they get along with their parents.

This difficulty in talking comfortably about their problems and their privacy is perhaps a reflection of the conflict, seen earlier, between children's desire to be able to talk more openly with their parents and their need for privacy. Again, this appears to be an area where American youth -- particularly teenagers -- are searching for the delicate balance which addresses both of these desires.

Virtually all children say they can talk comfortably with their parents about school (94%) and clothing (94%). Money (88%), religion (88%), and their friends (86%) are also easy topics of conversation.

Somewhat fewer (although still 80%) say they can talk comfortably about the way they get along with their parents. This is an area of conversation which children who have been through a divorce find particularly difficult (73%, compared with 82% among those who have not been through a divorce).

Two topics of conversation which children feel least comfortable talking about with their parents are privacy (65%) and problems they have (an area of comfortable communications for 76%, in total, but only 71% among teenagers).



2

Making Independent Decisions: At What Age?

Against the desire reported earlier for being treated more as adults, we explored at what age America's youth feel they can stop relying on their parents to tell them what they should and shouldn't do. At what age are they old enough to make decisions on their own?

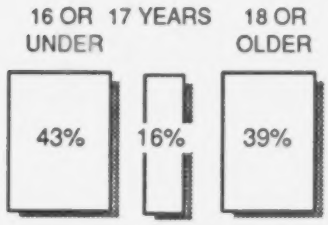
According to the teenagers in our survey (these questions were not asked of younger children), the answers range widely, depending on the activity. How late to stay out, whether or not to quit school, and whether or not to have sex -- these are all decision which can be made independently by age 17 according to the teens.

By age 18, people are old enough to decide whether or not to drink beer or wine, whether or not to smoke marijuana, and whether or not to buy pornography.

Deciding whether or not to drink liquor or get married, however, are decisions which teenagers feel should not be made independently until age 19.

DECIDING HOW LATE TO STAY OUT AT NIGHT
(Asked Of Teenagers Only)

Make Decision At Age:



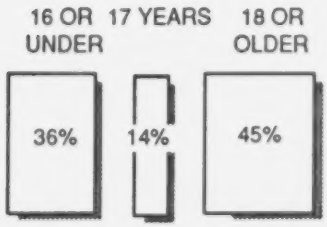
Virtually all the teenagers in our survey (84%) agree that decisions about choosing their own clothes can be made independently by children 14 years of age or under. Other decisions, however, require more maturity.

Seventeen is the median age at which teenagers feel they should be able to make decisions about how late to stay out at night, whether or not to quit school, and whether or not to have sex. In each case, however, there is a large split between those who feel a person should be able to make independent decisions below the 17 year old median age and those who feel that a person should have to be older.

Boys are more likely than girls to feel that 16 or younger is an appropriate age to decide how late to stay out, while girls more than boys think 18 or older is a more appropriate age. And older teens (15 to 17 years old) feel an older age is more appropriate than younger teens (13 and 14 years old).

DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO QUIT SCHOOL
(Asked Of Teenagers Only)

Make Decision At Age:



While 17 is the median age at which people should decide whether or not to quit school, fully 45% feel 18 or older is the appropriate age.

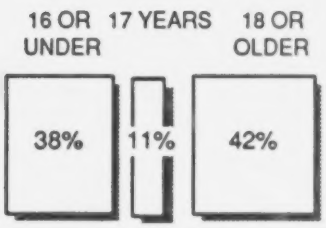
Teens in the Midwest and West feel the decision should be delayed to a slightly older age than teens in the Northeast or South.

The question of what age people should be before they decide whether or not to have sex also yields a split opinion, with 38% saying 16 or under, 11% saying 17, and 42% saying 18 or older.

2

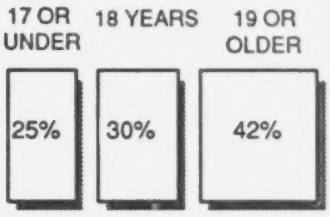
DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO HAVE SEX
(Asked Of Teenagers Only)

Make Decision At Age:



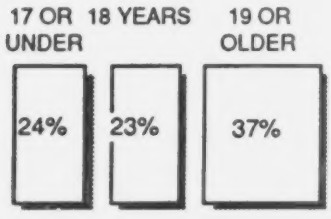
DECIDING WHETHER TO DRINK BEER OR WINE
(Asked Of Teenagers Only)

Make Decision At Age:



DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO SMOKE MARIJUANA
(Asked Of Teenagers Only)

Make Decision At Age:



Once again, teens in the Northeast lean most heavily toward making these decisions at a younger age, while those in the West feel an older age is more appropriate.

Younger teens would wait a little longer to make this decision than older teens.

Girls lean slightly more toward an older age than boys. Eighteen is the median age at which teenagers feel they should be able to make their own decisions about whether or not to drink beer or wine, whether or not to smoke marijuana, and whether or not to buy pornography.

With respect to drinking beer or wine, 3 in 10 teens (30%) fall exactly at the 18 year old median point, while 25% feel that 17 or under is an appropriate age to make these decisions and 42% feel that a person should be 19 or older. Demographic differences are less pronounced here than for the areas reported above.

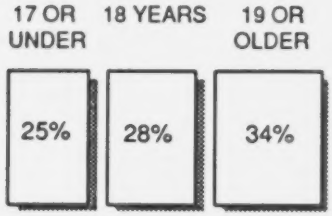
Older teens take a more liberal position than younger teens, and teens in the Northeast and West take a more liberal position than those in the South or Midwest.

When it comes to decisions about whether or not to smoke marijuana, 1 in 4 teens (23%) fall at the 18 year old median point, with an equal percentage (24%) advocating a younger age and 37% an older age. Again, older teens take a somewhat more liberal position than younger teens, and teens in the Northeast take a more liberal position than those in other regions.

2

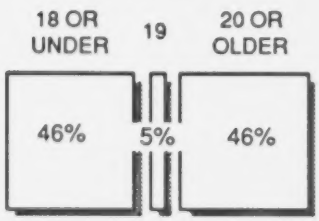
DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO BUY PORNOGRAPHY
(Asked Of Teenagers Only)

Make Decision At Age:



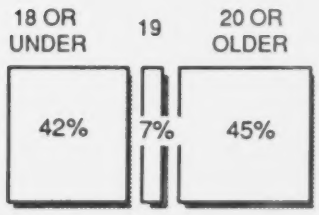
DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO DRINK LIQUOR
(Asked Of Teenagers Only)

Make Decision At Age:



DECIDING WHEN TO GET MARRIED
(Asked Of Teenagers Only)

Make Decision At Age:



And with respect to decisions about whether or not to buy pornography, opinion is almost evenly divided among those who feel that 18 is the appropriate age (28%), those who feel a younger age is appropriate (25%), and those who feel the age should be older (34%). The only significant demographic difference is that teenagers in the Northeast once again take a more liberal position than those in other regions of the country.

Whereas teenagers feel that 18 is an appropriate age to decide whether to drink beer or wine, they feel 19 is a more appropriate age for making decisions about drinking liquor. Opinion, however, is sharply divided. Only 5% fall at the median point of 19 years, with 43% supporting a lower age and 46% supporting a higher age. There are no significant differences across demographic groups.

Opinion is also sharply divided on the question of what is the proper age for making their own decisions about getting married. Forty-two percent say that 18 or younger is the right age for them to decide about marriage, and 45% say 20 or older is right.

Teenage boys opt for an older age than teenage girls, probably reflecting the tradition of husbands tending to be somewhat older than their wives.

Teens in the South are the most likely to favor having the decision on marriage made at 18 or younger, while those in the West are most likely to favor an older age.

Older teens favor a younger age for deciding about marriage than younger teens.

2

Sex Roles: The Male Advantage

A series of Roper surveys on the changing status of women in American society, conducted over the past ten years, found that while respect for women has risen dramatically, the world is still perceived -- by both men and women -- to be a man's world.

This perspective is echoed by America's youngsters. By a margin of two to one, the young people we interviewed say that boys have more privileges today than girls. And as they look ahead, they feel even more strongly that men have more privileges than women.

But while there may be more advantages in being a boy -- and later a man -- both sexes feel the pressures to do well. Boys and girls each feel that their own sex -- which ever it is -- has more pressure placed on them to do well in school.

By a two to one margin (50% - 26%), youngsters feel that boys today have more privileges than girls. This view is held equally by children of both sexes. There are, however, differences in opinion based upon age, as the advantages of being a boy are seen more among teenagers (57%) than younger children (42%).

Looking ahead to adulthood, the perception of male privilege grows even stronger, with 55% saying men have more privileges when they grow up, against 19% who feel women have more privileges. This view is held equally for youngsters of both sexes and all ages.

WHO HAVE MORE PRIVILEGES: BOYS OR GIRLS?

		Sex		Age	
	Total %	Male %	Female %	8-12 %	13-17 %
Have more privileges today:					
Boys	50	50	50	42	57
Girls	26	22	30	33	20
Same *(volunteered)*	19	22	16	18	20
Don't know	5	6	3	6	3
Have more privileges when they grow up:					
Men	55	56	54	52	58
Women	19	16	23	23	16
Same *(volunteered)*	19	21	16	16	21
Don't know	7	7	6	9	4

2

This perspective closely parallels the views of the adult population. A 1985 Roper poll found that 49% of the women we interviewed and 51% of the men feel, that in our society today, there are more advantages in being a man. This view has become more pronounced over the course of the past decade, suggesting that even though men's actual advantages may not have increased (although this may be true in some cases), public *consciousness* of men's advantages has grown.

IS IT MORE ADVANTAGEOUS TO BE A MAN OR A WOMAN?

(Asked Among Adults)*

	Total %	Sex: Men %	Sex: Women %
More advantages in being a man	50	51	49
More advantages in being a woman	8	8	8
No more advantages in being one than the other	40	39	41
Don't know	2	2	2

* Adult data drawn from *1985 Virginia Slims American Women's Opinion Poll*, conducted by The Roper Organization.

But even if there are more advantages in being a boy, today, and later a man, boys and girls each feel the pressures to succeed and do well. Overall, 45% say that people put more pressure on boys than girls to do well in school; 33% feel the pressures on girls are greater. However, this varies greatly by sex and age.

Among boys in our sample, a 53% majority feel that boys have more pressure, while only 24% feel girls have more pressure. By a 42% to 37% margin, the girls we spoke with feel girls receive more pressure than boys.

Similarly, 8 to 12 year olds are much more likely to feel that boys receive more pressure than girls -- 52% to 23%. Among

2

teenagers, however, the scale tips in the other direction -- 42% say girls have more pressure versus 39% who say boys do.

WHO HAVE FACE PRESSURE TO DO WELL IN SCHOOL: BOYS OR GIRLS?

		Sex		Age	
	Total %	Male %	Female %	8-12 %	13-17 %
Boys	45	53	37	52	39
Girls	33	24	42	23	42
Same (volunteered)	19	20	17	21	17
Don't know	4	3	4	5	2

2

Children's Perspective On Working Mothers

Working women are an increasingly important element of American society in the 1980s. For the first time ever, a majority of women work either full-time or part-time outside the home. A 1985 Roper survey of American women found that if they had to choose, a majority of women would opt for a job over staying at home.

As we saw earlier in this chapter, about three-quarters of the youngsters whom we surveyed in this poll have working mothers - - almost half (46%) have mothers who work full-time, while a quarter (25%) have mothers who work part-time. One of the greatest subjects of controversy in American society in recent years has been the effect on children when mothers work. The debate has largely been carried on by adults. What do children -- both those whose mothers work and those whose do not -- think about this phenomenon? What do they feel is the effect on children when mothers work?

The answer is, it depends. A plurality thinks it has a bad effect on young children (those 12 or under) when mothers work and no real effect either way on teenagers. But if asked to choose, a majority would prefer that their mothers have a job outside the home.

What do American youth feel is the effect of both mothers and fathers working outside the home? The answer varies depending on whom you talk to and whom you are talking about.

With respect to young children (those 12 or under), a 4 in 10 plurality (39%) feels that the overall effect of two working parents is negative. Three in ten (29%) feel there is no effect, while a quarter (25%) feel the effect of two working parents on young children is positive. However, the answers vary widely depending on the age and working status of the respondent's mother.

Teenagers are particularly adamant in their belief that it has a bad effect on young children when both parents work. Fully 48% hold this view. About a quarter (28%) feel it has no effect, and 19% feel it has a good effect.

However, young children, themselves, have a different perspective. Among this group, 31% feel the effect of working parents is good on children 12 or younger. The same percentage (31%) feel it has no effect, while only 28% feel the effect is bad.

What precisely is the effect on young people when mothers work? We explored this question from three perspectives -- do youngsters whose mothers work perform better or worse in school than those whose do not? Are they more or less independent? And do they get into more or less trouble? The answer differs in each case.

2

As might be expected, attitudes are also somewhat different among children whose mothers currently work and those whose do not. In both cases, a plurality feel the effect on young children is bad when both parents work, but there is a large difference in the intensity of opinion. Among those whose mothers do not work outside the home, 48% feel the effect on young children is bad, compared with only 35% among those whose mothers work full-time and 36% among those whose mothers work part-time.

A vastly different picture emerges when children are asked about two working parents and its effect on teenagers. Here, 46% feel it has no effect, while 26% say it has a good effect and only 18% say it has a bad effect. This general pattern of opinion holds true for all subgroups--including both younger and older children, and those whose mothers work as well as those whose don't.

OVERALL EFFECT OF MOTHERS AND FATHERS BOTH WORKING OUTSIDE THE HOME

		Age		*Mother works:*		
	Total %	*8-12* %	*13-17* %	*Full Time* %	*Part Time* %	*Not at All* %
Effect on children 12 or under is:						
Good	25	31	19	28	26	19
Bad	39	28	48	35	36	48
No effect	29	31	28	30	33	25
Don't know	7	9	6	7	4	9
Effect on teenagers is:						
Good	26	27	26	29	28	22
Bad	18	20	16	16	20	22
No effect	46	39	53	48	45	47
Don't know	9	14	5	8	8	10

2

With respect to school performance, a 62% majority say that young people whose mothers work outside the home do about the same in school as those whose mothers do not. One-quarter (26%) feel these children do worse in school while only 7% feel they do better.

Respondents whose mothers do not work are the most likely (36%) to take the position that children whose mothers work do worse in school, although even among this group (51%) feel there is no real difference in school performance.

With respect to their independence, a 47% plurality say that young people whose mothers work are more independent than those whose mothers don't work. Thirty-eight percent say they are about the same, while 7% say these youngsters are less independent. In this instance, there is no real difference between respondents whose mothers work and those whose don't, but there are some age differences.

A 63% majority of teenagers feel the children of working mothers are more independent. Only 30% among 8 to 12 year olds agree, with a 50% majority claiming that there is no difference. Perhaps this suggests that working mothers make provisions for after school child care when their children are young, while giving more independence to teenagers.

PERCEPTIONS REGARDING ATTRIBUTES OF CHILDREN WHOSE MOTHERS WORK COMPARED WITH THOSE WHO DON'T

		Age		Mother works:		
	Total	8-12	13-17	Full Time	Part Time	Not at All
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Children whose mothers work:						
Do better in school	7	10	5	9	7	5
Do worse in school	26	22	29	22	21	36
About the same	62	62	62	66	67	51
Get into more trouble	40	36	43	34	38	51
Get into less trouble	7	9	4	6	6	7
Same amount of trouble	48	47	49	54	51	35
Are more independent	47	30	63	49	51	42
Are less independent	7	8	7	6	7	9
About the same	38	50	27	37	38	40

2

If the balance of opinion is that the children of working mothers are more independent than children whose mothers do not work, there is somewhat of a belief that they also get into more trouble. While the plurality of youngsters (48%) believe that there is no difference, a strong 4 in 10 minority believe that the children of working mothers get into more trouble. This view is held primarily by children whose mothers do not work (51%). Children whose mothers work either full-time or part-time are less likely to agree -- 34% and 38% respectively.

The final -- and perhaps the most telling -- perspective on the question of working mothers is the most personal. Youngsters were asked, "Regardless of whether or not she currently works outside the home, would you prefer that your mother have a job outside the home, or would you prefer that she stay at home to take care of the house and family?" The answer is a decisive vote -- 59% to 34% -- in favor of work. But again, these are sharp demographic differences.

First, teenagers are quite adamant in their support of working mothers, 67% to 26%. Younger children are somewhat less strongly of this opinion, however, with 50% saying they prefer their mothers to work and 43% saying they prefer that she stay home to take care of the family. Among the youngest age group (8-10 year olds), the vote is, in fact, tied at 46% to 46%.

Even sharper differences are seen with respect to the current working status of the respondents' mothers. Children whose mothers currently work strongly endorse their working. Conversely, youngsters whose mothers do not work outside the home strongly favor their mothers not working.

In expressing these opinions, perhaps children are merely reflecting the status quo in their own households. Or perhaps mothers have considered the needs of their children, and those who feel their children need them at home have stayed at home, while those who feel this is not the case have decided to work if they so desire.

DO YOU PREFER YOUR MOTHER TO HAVE JOB OUTSIDE HOME OR STAY HOME AND CARE FOR FAMILY?

		Age		*Mother works:*		
	Total	*8-12*	*13-17*	*Full Time*	*Part Time*	*Not at All*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Prefer Mother to:						
Work Outside the Home	59	50	67	73	71	25
Stay Home	34	43	26	22	24	67

2

Children and Their Grandparents

As we saw earlier in this chapter, almost all (95%) of the youths we surveyed have at least one living grandparent, with an average of 2.75 grandparents per respondent. It has been said that in today's mobile society children lack the contact with grandparents that helps them define who they are, adds a dimension of love and support in their lives, and gives them perspective on the aging process. In the view of young people, what is the role of grandparents in their lives? Do they live nearby? How often do children see their grandparents? How well do kids feel they know this important link with their ancestral past?

According to the poll, most children (65%) live near (or live with) their grandparents, and about half say they see their grandparents quite often. Two out of three children feel they see or are in contact with their grandparents the right amount of time.

There are some interesting differences between childrens' familiarity with their mothers' parents and their fathers' parents. Nearly half feel they know a lot about their maternal grandparents compared with only a third who feel as knowledgeable about their paternal grandparents.

Almost all (95%) of the children we surveyed have at least one living grandparent. Two-thirds (65%) say they live near (or with) at least one of their grandparents.

A higher percentage of children in the Northeast (73%) and Midwest (70%) live near or with their grandparents than children in the South (60%) or West (60%).

White children are somewhat more likely than black children (67% to 59%) to live near or with their grandparents.

About half of the youngsters in our survey (49%) say they see their grandparents quite often, and an additional one in three (31%) see them occasionally. Only 1 in 5 (19%) do not see their grandparents often.

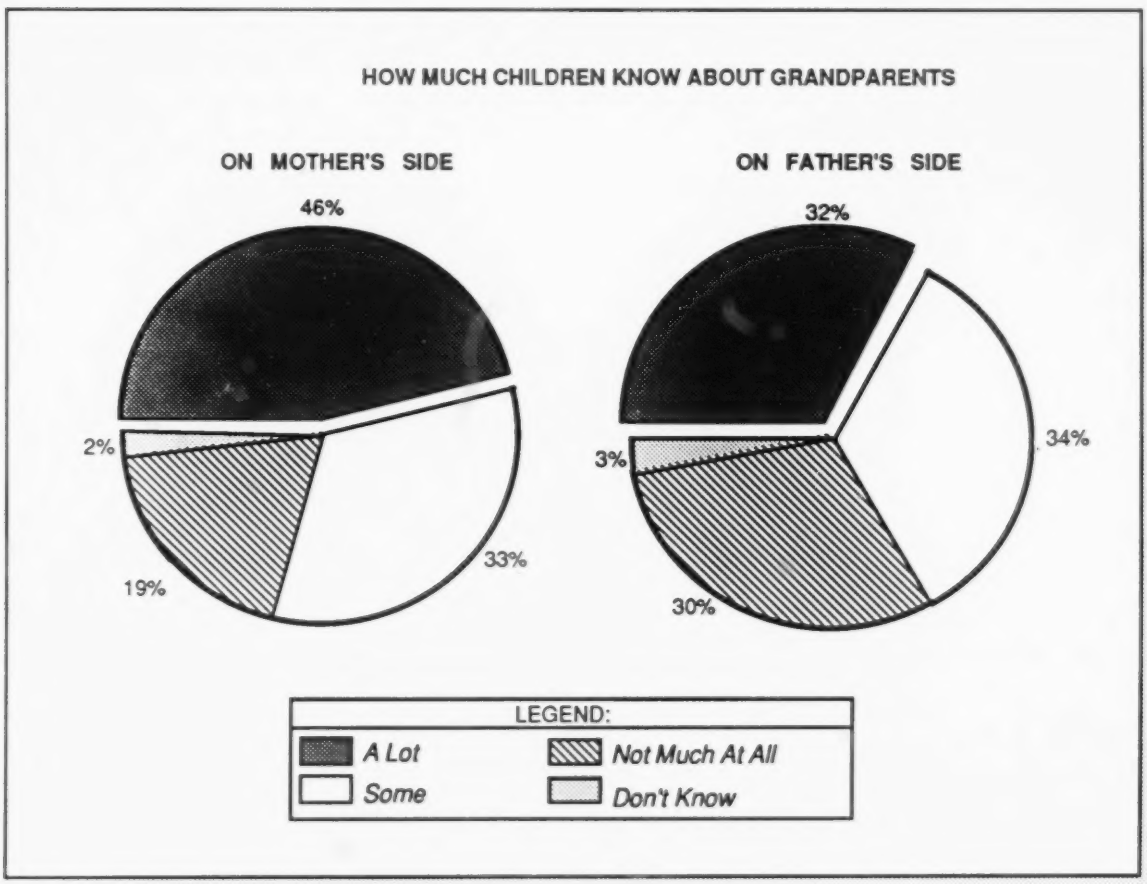
The only significant demographic differences are seen when it comes to region. Children in the Northeast, who live closest to their grandparents, also see their grandparents most frequently. Nearly 6 in 10 (58%) of this group see their grandparents quite often, compared with 50% of those in the Midwest, 48% in the South, and 40% in the West.

Regardless of how close they live or how often they see their grandparents, 2 in 3 youngsters (65%) -- across all subgroups -- feel they see, talk, or are in touch with their grandparents "just the right amount of time." Nearly 3 in 10 (28%) feel they have too little contact with their grandparents; 4% feel they see their grandparents too much.

2

One interesting finding about grandparents is the fact that children feel far more knowledgeable about their mothers' parents than their fathers'. Nearly half (46%) know "a lot" about their mothers' parents, while only a third (32%) know a lot about their fathers' parents.

Since this knowledge gap is almost equally wide among children who have never been through a divorce and those who have, the differences cannot be attributed to the fact that more children live with their mothers than with their fathers. Rather, it is perhaps an indication that frequently parents (and hence their children) are closer to the wife's parents than to the husband's. And furthermore, children tend to be closer to their mothers.



Chapter Three:

American Youth Grade Their Schools

The American Chicle Youth Poll

The Roper Organization Inc.

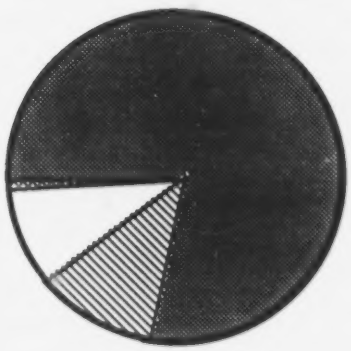
3

Overall Satisfaction With Schools And Schooling

Since the late 1970s, and increasingly in the 1980s, there has been a great show of concern throughout our country about the quality of education in the public schools. Leading periodicals have devoted entire issues to "why Johnny can't read or write." Government and parents, possibly spurred on by these media reports have voiced their increasing dissatisfaction with the American public school system. Much has been said about declining S.A.T. scores. Some have criticized the curricula, while others have complained about the quality of teachers, and many have proposed possible solutions to these problems.

Given the degree of public concern, it seemed appropriate to explore the attitudes of young people themselves toward the school system they are a part of. Surprisingly, we found the young do not appear to share their parents' concern. In fact, the poll revealed that an overwhelming majority of today's students like their school and are generally satsified with them. Furthermore, majorities feel that both teachers and parents expect the "right amount" from them when it comes to school.

DOES YOUR SCHOOL MAKE YOU "FEEL GOOD"?



LEGEND:	
Does	78%
Doesn't	11
In Between	10
Don't Know	1

Just over three-quarters of those interviewed (78%) say that the school they go to makes them personally feel good. One in ten take the opposite point of view, and another one in ten say they have mixed feelings. Demographically, there appears to be little difference in attitude toward schools. Females tend to be slightly more positive (80% good feeling) than males (75% good feeling). Younger children are, not surprisingly, somewhat more positive than teens (80% vs. 76%). There are, however, two demographic subgroups which stand out:

Downscale students are not as positive as their upscale counterparts. Only 7 in 10 of those in the lowest socioeconomic group (70%), as compared with 8 in 10 of those in the higher group (79%) say the school they go to makes them personally feel good.

Blacks do not feel as positive as their white counterparts. Two-thirds of black students (66%) feel good about their school compared with four-fifths of white students (79%) who feel that way. This may simply reflect the fact that blacks often fall into lower socioeconomic categories.

It should be noted however, that large majorities in both these disenfranchised groups *do* say that the school they attend makes them feel good.

3

Fully three-quarters of today's young people (77%) say they like school. One in ten (10%) say they dislike school, and just over 1 in 10 (12%) say they have mixed feelings about it. Demographically, there are some interesting differences.

As noted earlier, a slightly higher percentage of girls than boys say their school is something they feel good about. An even wider gap between the sexes exists with regard to liking school in general. Just over 7 in 10 males (71%), as compared with over 8 in 10 females (83%), say they like school.

Even though black students are not as likely as white students to feel good about the particular school they attend, a higher percentage of blacks appears to like school in general. 80% of black students say they like school, as compared with 75% of whites. Perhaps this reflects a belief on the part of blacks that education is a means of climbing the socioeconomic ladder.

Downscale respondents do not appear to like or dislike school to any greater extent than their upscale counterparts.

It is again worth noting that despite these relatively minor differences, large majorities in all groups say they like school.

ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL

	Like School	*Don't Like School*	*Mixed Feelings*
Total	77%	10%	12%
Sex			
Male	71	14	15
Female	83	7	10
Age			
8-12	78	10	12
13-17	76	11	12
Race			
White	75	12	12
Black	80	6	14
Socioeconomic status			
Upper/upper-middle	77	10	12
Lower-middle	78	11	11
Lower	75	10	14
Type of school			
Public	77	11	12
Non-public	76	8	16

While the question on liking or disliking school provides a measure of enjoyment, and an overall orientation toward the educational process, it does not measure students' satisfaction with their own particular schools. Therefore, we asked today's young people whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with their school.

While many adults have made clear their dissatisfaction with today's educational system, students currently in the system appear to be quite satisfied. Over 8 in 10 of those interviewed (84%) say they are satisfied with the school they go to. There is little variation in attitudes by most subgroups, although once again, the responses of blacks and downscale students differ from those of their counterparts.

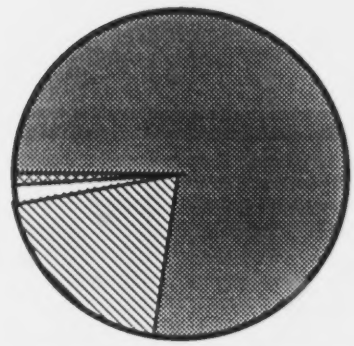
Blacks are simply not as satisfied as whites. 74% of blacks, as compared with 85% of whites, say they are satisfied with their school. Again, blacks may feel that education will provide a boost up the socioeconomic ladder, leading them to cast a more critical eye on the education they are getting.

Those in the lowest socioeconomic group (78%) are not as satisfied as their upscale counterparts (85%) -- possibly for the same reasons as blacks.

Once again it should be noted that despite these differences, large majorities in all subgroups express satisfaction with their school. While granting that young people do not have the life experience their parents use as a basis for judging, and therefore their opinion must be viewed with caution, it is nonetheless surprising that their level of satisfaction is as high as it is. Even among those who *dislike* school in general, a majority (56%) say they are satisfied with the school they actually go to.

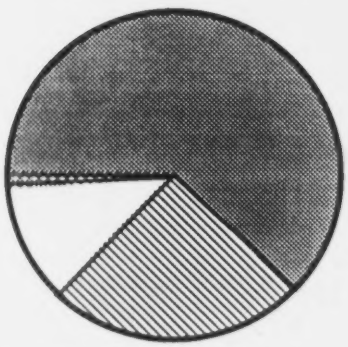
3

WHETHER TEACHERS EXPECT TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE



LEGEND:	
Right Amount	75%
Too Much	19
Too Little	4
Don't Know	1

IS THERE TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE HOME WORK EACH DAY?



LEGEND:	
Right Amount	62%
Too Much	25
Too Little	12
Don't Know	1

This high level of satisfaction with one's school can perhaps be explained in part by students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations. When asked whether their teachers expect too much, too little or about the right amount from them, a large 75% majority answer "right amount." Only 2 in 10 (19%) say their teachers expect too much, and only 4% say their teachers expect too little.

Breaking this response down demographically, the poll indicates no difference in perception among males and females, nor among blacks and whites. There are, however, interesting differences in two other areas.

Younger children have an even more positive attitude toward their teachers than do teens. While 82% of those in the 8 to 12 year old group say their teachers expect the right amount from them, only 70% of the 13 to 17 year group share this viewpoint. Conversely, 15% of the younger children say their teachers expect too much as compared with 23% of the teens. This may be a reflection of adolescent rebelliousness and an unwillingness to fully accept the authority of their teachers, as well as the normally heavier work load in secondary schools.

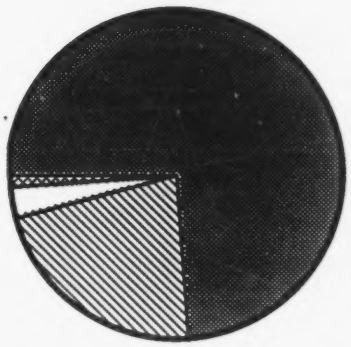
Socioeconomically, the more upscale the respondents, the more likely they are to feel their teachers expect the right amount. Fully 78% of those in the upper and upper-middle groups say their teachers expect the right amount as compared with 66% of those in the lowest group. Conversely, 17% of those in the upper and upper-middle classes say their teachers expect too much as compared with 25% of those in the lowest group. However, nearly twice as many in the lower group (7%) as in the upper groups (4%) say their teachers expect too little. This relatively higher level of "too much" and "too little" expectation among the lower group may simultaneously represent two separate groups: one that has given up on education and doesn't want any pressure from teachers to produce in schools; and another that, as previously noted, sees education as a means of advancement and seeks the most that can be gotten from school.

Attitudes toward homework are not as glowing as feelings about teachers. Just over 6 in 10 (62%) feel they are given the right amount of homework each day. But fully one-quarter of the respondents (25%) feel too much homework is given each day, and just over 1 in 10 would like to have more. Although some slight demographic differences exist, there is a high degree of unanimity on the question of homework.

3

Students' perceptions of their parents expectations with respect to school are very much in line with their perceptions of teachers' expectations. Approximately 3 in 4 of those interviewed (74%) feel their parents expect the right amount from them. Just under 1 in 4 (22%) feel their parents expect too much, while 3% think their parents expect too little. Demographically, there are no perceptual differences between the genders or the races. However, the age groups, socioeconomic classes, and four regions do not see eye to eye.

WHETHER PARENTS EXPECT TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE IN TERMS OF SCHOOL



LEGEND:	
About Right	*74%*
Too Much	*22*
Too Little	*3*
They Differ	*1*

Those in the younger age group are more likely than teens to feel that their parents expect the "right amount ." Fully 8 in 10 of those aged 8 to 12 say their parents expect the right amount while just under 7 in 10 of those in their teens agree. Teens (28%) are more likely than their younger counterparts to feel their parents expect too much--no doubt a reflection of the independence and personal individual standards adolescents are striving to establish.

The lower socioeconomic group as a whole is least likely to see their parents' expectations as appropriate. Just under two-thirds (65%) of those in the lower class feel their parents expect the right amount, compared with over three-quarters of those in the lower-middle group (77%) and the upper-middle and upper groups (73%). The lower group has the highest percentage of those who feel their parents expect too much (28%) and too little (5%).

Northeasterners are more likely than their regional counterparts to feel their parents are expecting "too much." Just under 3 in 10 Northeasterners (29%) say their parents expect "too much," compared with 2 in 10 among those from the other three regions.

In summary, it would seem that, on the whole, today's young people are satisfied with their school. Large majorities feel personally good about their school. They like attending school and are satisfied with it. They feel their teachers and their parents expect the right amount of work from them.

3

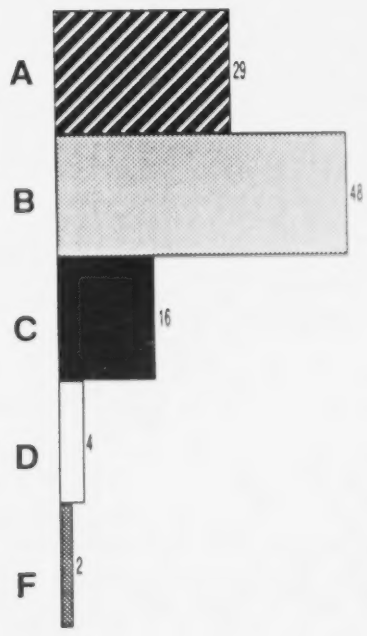
The Quality Of Schools

As noted earlier, one of the areas of great debate during the past few years has been the quality of the public school system and the education it provides. Some have called for better teachers and for merit pay to encourage good teachers to stay in the educational system. Others have said the problem lies in poorly designed curricula and a lack of attention to the "three Rs"--reading, writing and arithmetic. And there has been a call for refurbishing the infrastructure with better books, equipment and physical plants. Finally, some have argued that it is lack of discipline that has made the schools crime and drug infested.

In order to assess the perceived quality of today's schools, respondents were asked to assign a grade to their school on a scale of "A" to "F", just as they are graded daily. While schools were not given straight "As" as might be hoped for, they did not fail either. In fact, schools as a whole received a very respectable grade, as did specific elements within the school.

If, as in most schools, we use the standard formula to assign an "A" a value of 4 points, a "B" a value of three points, a "C" a value of 2 points, a "D" a value of 1 point, and an "F" a value of 0 points, we can calculate a grade point average. Young people give their school as a whole a grade point average of 3.0 (a solid "B"). 29% of those polled give their school a grade of "A." The plurality (48%) give their school a "B." A fifth give a grade of either "C" or "D." Only 2% give their school a failing grade.

HOW STUDENTS GRADE THEIR SCHOOLS



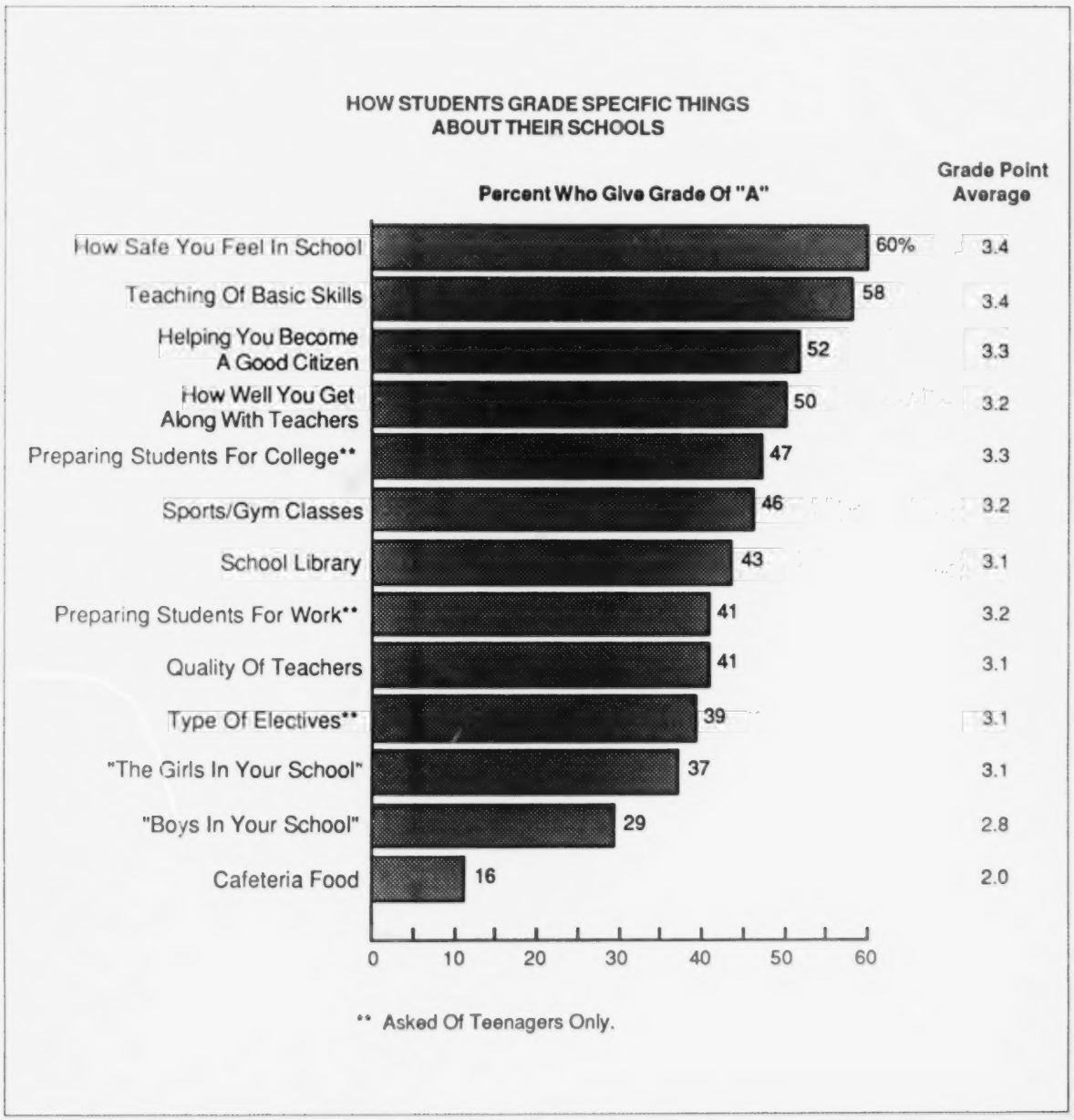
When examined demographically, there is basic agreement among the subgroups--most give their school a grade point average of about 3.0. There is, however, one very interesting difference:

> The older the respondents, the lower the grade they are likely to give to their school. 8 to 10 year olds give their school a grade point average of 3.3. Those aged 11 to 14 give a grade point average of 3.0. Those aged 15 to 17 give a grade point average of 2.7. This may reflect a better ability to judge as one gets older, or a rebelliousness against authority, or possibly some combination of the two.

After students graded their school as a whole, they were asked to give grades to specific aspects of their school. Their answers are again somewhat surprising in light of the current criticisms being leveled at the educational system.

The highest grades are given to how safe students feel in school and the teaching of basic skills--a grade point average of 3.4 for each. Next comes helping students become good citizens (3.3), preparing students for college (3.3), how well they get along with teachers (3.2), the sports and gym classes (3.2), and helping non- college bound students to

prepare for work (3.2). The school library, the quality of most teachers, the types of electives offered, and the "girls in your school" all received a 3.1. The "boys in your school" only received a 2.8. Not surprisingly, in last place, is the cafeteria food which received merely a 2.0.


HOW STUDENTS GRADE SPECIFIC THINGS ABOUT THEIR SCHOOLS
Percent Who Give Grade Of "A"
Grade Point Average
How Safe You Feel In School 60% 3.4
Teaching Of Basic Skills 58 3.4
Helping You Become A Good Citizen 52 3.3
How Well You Get Along With Teachers 50 3.2
Preparing Students For College** 47 3.3
Sports/Gym Classes 46 3.2
School Library 43 3.1
Preparing Students For Work** 41 3.2
Quality Of Teachers 41 3.1
Type Of Electives** 39 3.1
"The Girls In Your School" 37 3.1
"Boys In Your School" 29 2.8
Cafeteria Food 16 2.0
0 10 20 30 40 50 60
** Asked Of Teenagers Only.

3

There are some interesting demographic differences to be noted.

Just as with the grade for school as a whole, the older the respondent, the lower the grade is likely to be: 8 to 10 year olds give their feeling of safety in school a grade of 3.6, compared with a 3.4 from those aged 15 to 17; 8 to 10 year olds give the teaching of basic skills a 3.6, compared with a 3.4 from those aged 15 to 17; finally, the youngest give the quality of their teachers a 3.4, compared with a 2.9 from the oldest. This may be a condemnation of high school teachers, or simply the unwillingness of older adolescents to accept their authority, or may reflect the fact that younger students have only one teacher and therefore they can establish a stronger rapport.

Blacks and whites have some interesting differences of opinion. Whites (3.5) appear to feel safer in school than blacks (3.2). Whites also give a higher grade when it comes to preparing the college bound for college (3.3 versus 3.1) and the quality of teachers (3.2 versus 3.0). However, when asked about preparing non-college bound students for work, blacks give a higher grade (3.3 vs. 3.1). These differences between blacks and whites do not appear to be a result of separate and unequal facilities for each race. Over 8 in 10 of the blacks interviewed (84%) said they attend racially mixed schools. The explanation may be that blacks tend to be more downscale, and are therefore attending schools with a more downscale student body, albeit racially mixed.

Socioeconomically, those highest up on the scale tend to give higher grades than those at the bottom. Those in the upper and upper middle groups give safety a grade of 3.5, compared with a grade of 3.1 from those in the lowest group. The same pattern applies for teaching of basic skills (3.5 vs. 3.2), preparing college bound students for college (3.3 vs. 3.2), preparing non-college bound students for work (3.2 vs. 3.0), and the quality of teachers (3.2 vs. 2.9).

Not surprisingly, those who attend non-public schools (either private or religious) give higher grades to four of the five items shown. Those in non-public schools are more likely to feel safe (3.7 vs. 3.4), to feel the teaching of basic skills is better (3.6 vs. 3.4), to feel the college preparation is better (3.5 vs. 3.2), and that the quality of the teachers is higher (3.3 vs. 3.1).

3

In summary, the "B" grade that today's students assign their schools is surprising in light of the high level of dissatisfaction among adults. The grade assigned to the overall school is validated by the grade assigned each of the specifics within the school. Thus, the "B" grade appears to be a valid measure of students' perceptions of their schools. While not the "A" that parents may be hoping for, the grade is nonetheless above average.

GRADE POINT AVERAGE OF SELECTED ITEMS
(By Demographic Groups)

	Feeling Safe At School	*Teaching Of Basic Skills*	*Preparing Students for College***	*Preparing Students for Working***	*Quality of Teachers*
Total	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.2	3.1
Sex					
Male	3.4	3.4	3.2	3.2	3.1
Female	3.4	3.5	3.3	3.2	3.2
Age					
8-12 (net)	**3.5**	**3.5**	**NA**	**NA**	**3.4**
8-10	3.6	3.6	NA	NA	3.4
11-12	3.3	3.5	NA	NA	3.2
13-17(net)	**3.4**	**3.3**	**3.3**	**3.2**	**3.0**
13-14	3.4	3.4	3.2	3.2	3.1
15-17	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.2	2.9
Race					
White	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.1	3.2
Black	3.2	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.0
Socioeconomic status					
Upper/upper-middle	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.2	3.2
Lower-middle	3.4	3.4	3.2	3.2	3.2
Lower	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.0	2.9
Region					
Northeast	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.1	3.1
Midwest	3.5	3.4	3.2	3.1	3.1
South	3.4	3.5	3.2	3.3	3.2
West	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.2	3.1
Type School Attend					
Public	3.4	3.4	3.2	3.2	3.1
Non-Public	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.2	3.3

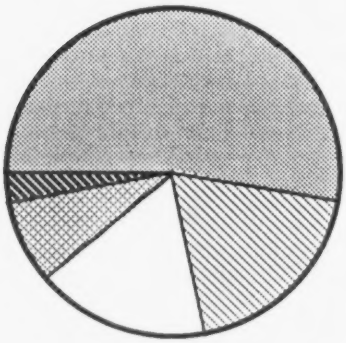
NA = Not Asked.
** Asked of teens only.

3

What's Important To Study

In addition to basics, school teaches students many things. It teaches students how to get along with their peers. Through extra-curricular activities, it allows for achievements in sports, music and drama. For some students, it is a preparation for college, while for others it is a preparation for the vocational world. In some cases, "life classes" are even offered which teach students basic skills for when they graduate, such as how to do a household budget. As adults, we all have our own ideas as to what is important to learn in school. Therefore, we set out to find what today's students think is most important about school.

WHAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT SCHOOL?



LEGEND:	
Subjects	53%
Learning To Get Along With Others	19
Making Friends	17
Extracurriculars	8
Don't Know	3

When offered a list comprised of the subjects they learn, the friends they make, the extra-curricular activities, and learning to get along with others, today's students see the subjects they learn as the most important thing about school. In fact a majority (53%) see the subjects learned as most important. Just under 2 in 10 see learning to get along with others (19%), or the friends they make (17%) as the most important thing about school. Under 1 in 10 see extra-curricular activities as most important.

It is worth noting that all demographic subgroups are in basic agreement on one thing, albeit to varying degrees: the most important thing about school is the subjects learned. When broken down by demographic subgroups, some interesting differences appear.

Females are slightly more inclined to pick the subjects learned, while males give a relatively higher weight to extracurricular activities. More females (57%) than males (50%) name the subjects learned. Twice as many males (10%) as females (5%) name extra-curricular activities--undoubtedly a reflection of the key role that traditional male sports play in this area.

Blacks are much more likely than whites to name the subjects learned as the most important part of school. Just under one half of the whites (48%) feel that the subjects learned are most important. Nearly three-quarters of blacks (73%) express this point of view. This again might reflect blacks' perceptions of the value of an education in terms of rising up the socioeconomic ladder and the importance of learning about subjects that will allow them to advance in life.

Similarly, members of the lower income group (58%) place a slightly higher emphasis on the subjects learned than their upscale counterparts (51%). Again, the motivation of using

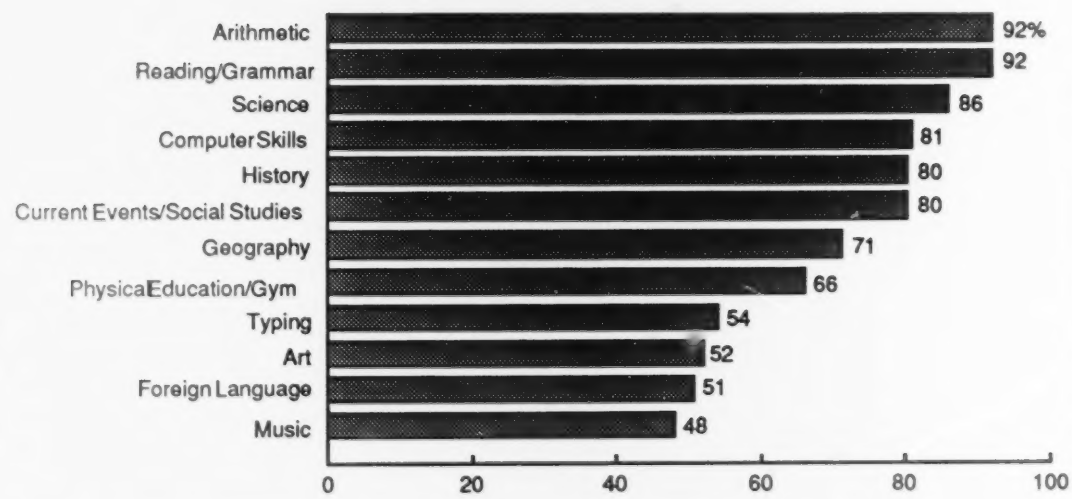
an education to climb the socioeconomic ladder may be at play here.

Public school students are more likely to emphasize the subjects they learn than non-public school attendees. Over half of public school students (54%), compared with under half of those in non-public schools (45%), say the subjects they learn in school are most important. This may reflect a "taken-for-granted" attitude on the part of private school students, whose parents may have transmitted the feeling that a superior education is worth paying for, and therefore that students tend to look beyond the basics when it comes to what is important.

Students were also asked to rate a list of subjects as important or not important. Due to the different nature of secondary school and primary school--more advanced subjects, elective courses, etc.--somewhat different lists were given to young children and teens. Overwhelming majorities from both groups rated the basic subjects as important.

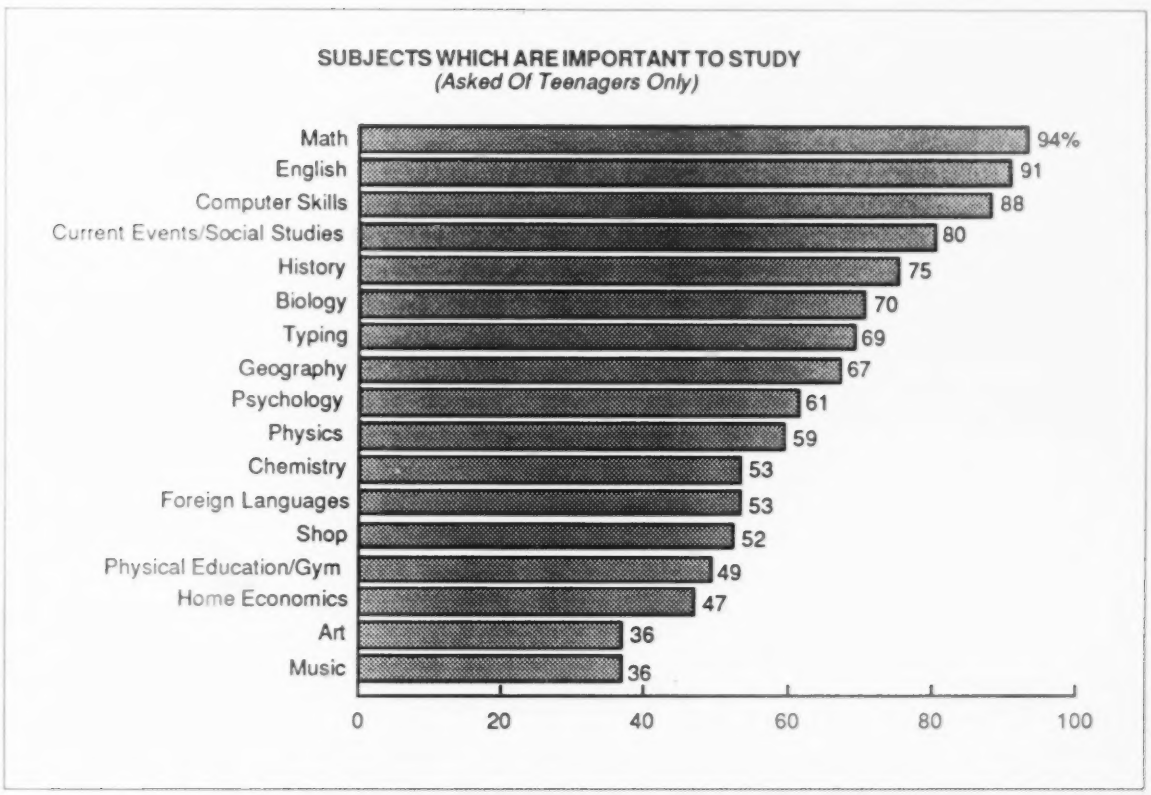
Over 9 in 10 young children label the basics -- arithmetic (92%) and reading/grammar (92%) as important. Nearly 9 in 10 name science (86%), while 8 in 10 see computer skills (81%), history (80%), and current events/social studies (80%) as important. Seven in ten categorize geography (71%) as important while slightly fewer (66%) think the same of physical education/gym. Named as important by just over half are typing (54%), art (52%), and foreign languages (51%). Not quite half (48%) feel music is an important subject to study.

SUBJECTS WHICH ARE IMPORTANT TO STUDY
(Asked Of 8-12 Years Only)



3

Among 13 to 17 year olds, the same differentiation occurs. Over 9 in 10 call the basics -- math (94%) and English (91%) -- important. Eight in ten or more name computer skills (88%) and current events/social studies (80%) as important. Over 7 in 10 feel this way about history (75%), while exactly 7 in 10 name biology (70%). Two-thirds call typing (69%) and geography (67%) important, while 6 in 10 feel this way about psychology (61%) and physics (59%). Over half see chemistry (53%), foreign languages (53%) and "shop" (52%) as important. Teens are evenly split on the subject of physical education, with 49% calling it important and an equal percent calling it unimportant. Teens feel the following are not quite as important: home economics (47%), art (36%) and music (36%).



When examined by demographic subgroups, some interesting differences appear among the results of the 8 to 12 year olds.

While young males and females are in general agreement on the relative importance of each of the listed subjects, young males place a higher relative importance on computer skills (83% vs. 78%) and physical education (71% vs. 60%).

Conversely, young females are more likely than young males to see as important reading/grammar (94% vs. 89%), typing (58% vs. 50%), and music (53% vs. 44%) -- a stereotypical, hence not unexpected, finding.

Young blacks are more likely to see each of the listed subjects as important than their young white counterparts, with three exceptions: geography (whites, 72%; blacks, 69%), art (52% vs. 48%), and foreign languages (50% vs. 41%).

Young children in the lower socioeconomic group are less likely to see most subjects as important than their upscale counterparts, with two exceptions: 8 to 12 year olds in the lower group are more likely to see typing as important (65%) than either the lower middle group (57%) or the upper middle and upper groups (47%). Similarly, 56% of the youngsters in the lower group call art important, compared with 51% of their counterparts.

While the upscale are more likely to label most of the subjects important, young children who attend public school are more likely than their upscale private school counterparts to see most of the listed subjects as important. This may appear surprising in view of the upscale nature of private school attendees -- but is likely to be a reinforcement of the "taken-for-granted" attitude on the part of private school students that the subjects are what they are there for. Higher percentages of public school attendees call the following important: arithmetic (93%, public; 88%,non-public), science (87% vs. 82%), geography (72% vs. 67%), physical education (67% vs. 60%), typing (56% vs. 45%), and foreign languages (53% vs. 43%).

3

Some interesting differences also appear among the various teenage demographic subgroups.

Teenage females appear to be more scholastically-oriented than their male counterparts. Teenage females are more likely to see the following as important: English (95%, female; 87% male), computer skills (90% vs. 86%), biology (73% vs. 68%), typing (82% vs. 57%), psychology (68% vs. 54%), foreign languages (60% vs. 47%), home economics (58% vs. 37%), and music (38% vs. 33%). Conversely, teenage males are more likely than their female counterparts to see "shop" (68%, male vs. 37%, female) and physical education (59% vs. 38%) as important subjects. This pattern by sex is similar to that shown among younger students, though more pronounced.

Teenage blacks are more likely than whites to see the listed subjects as important. While the distinction is not as great as among 8 to 12 year old blacks and whites, the overall pattern applies again. There are only two subjects that blacks are less likely than whites to see as important: current events/social studies (81% whites; 74% blacks), and physics (59% white; 53% black). On all other subjects they either agree, or blacks are more likely to view the subject as important.

Teenage members of the upper socioeconomic groups are more likely to view the subjects as important than their downscale counterparts. The one exception to this is home economics, which 54% of those in the lower class see as important versus 50% of lower middle class teenagers, and 43% of upper-middle and upper class teenagers.

Teenagers who attend non-public schools appear to be more scholastically-oriented than their public school counterparts--possibly a reflection of the fact that they are somewhat more likely to be college bound and by this point are less likely to take the quality of their education for granted. In keeping with their more upscale nature, they are more likely to view the following as important: current events/social studies (87% non-public vs. 80% public), history (85% vs. 74%), typing (80% vs. 68%), physics (65% vs. 58%), chemistry (61% vs. 52%), physical education (60% vs. 47%), and music (48% vs. 34%).

It is commendable that today's students understand the importance of the basics. The overwhelming majorities who call these subjects important is proof of their understanding. The overwhelming percentages labelling computer skills important appears to show great foresight on the part of today's students. They seem to understand that the proliferation of computers in our society will continue and computer skills may someday be added to the basics -- reading, writing, and arithmetic. One disturbing finding is the low percentage of students who feel foreign languages are important to study. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent, and the U.S. economy more global in scope, a knowledge of foreign languages and foreign cultures may grow in importance.

3

Improving The Quality Of Schools

Today's students have so far painted a fairly rosy picture of their schools. Majorities say they like school. For most, school is something that makes them feel good. Majorities also say they are satisified with their own school. When asked to grade their school, the average grade given is a very respectable "B". This overall grade is corroborated by the grades given to specific items within the school. Most of the items asked about have a grade point average of "B" or better. Majorites also say their teachers and parents expect the right amount from them.

Thus, it does not appear that young people share the concern of their adult counterparts. However, today's youth do see room for improvement in their school. One third say that at least some students in their school are promoted to a higher grade undeservedly, and another third say that at least some of their peers cannot read or write adequately. Thus, more attention to basics is seen by many as a way of improving their school. Students also call for more attention on the part of parents to what they are learning in school, curriculum design, and school administration.

In keeping with our interest in the quality of schools and education, teenagers were asked about the extent to which students who do not deserve to be promoted to a higher grade are promoted, and the extent to which students can't read or write adequately. One third of those interviewed (35%) say that at least some of the time students are promoted who do not deserve to be; 1 in 10 say this occurs a lot. Another third (32%) say there are at least some students in their school who cannot read or write adequately; fewer than 1 in 10 say this occurs a lot.

An analysis of the various demographic subgroups gives an indication of why respondents in lower socioeconomic groups, and blacks in particular, cast a more critical eye on today's educational system.

A higher percentage of blacks than whites say there are at least some students in their school who are promoted undeservedly or who cannot read and write adequately. Many more blacks (42%) than whites (33%) say there are at least some students in their school who are promoted when they should be left back. Similarly, more blacks (44%) than whites (29%) say they go to school with at least some students who cannot read or write adequately.

The same discrepancy exists in the perceptions of upscale and downscale teenagers: 3 in 10 of those in the highest socioeconomic group say they go to school with at least some students who are promoted when they don't deserve to be, as compared with 4 in 10 of those in the lowest socioeconomic

group. Similarly, one quarter of those in the highest socioeconomic group say they attend school with at least some students who cannot read or write adequately. Over half of those in the lowest socioeconomic group claim this to be the case.

Public schools are apparently more likely than non-public schools to promote students when they shouldn't or to have students who cannot read or write adequately. Under 1 in 5 of those in non-public schools say that at least some of their peers are promoted undeservedly (15%) or cannnot read or write adequately (18%). More than twice as many public school students say at least some of their peers are promoted when they shouldn't be (37%) or cannot read and write adequately (34%).

WHAT GOES ON IN YOUR OWN SCHOOL?
(A Lot/Some Combined, Teenagers Only)

	Students Being Promoted Who Don't Deserve It	*Students Who Cannot Read Or Write Adequately*
Total	35%	32%
Sex		
Male	37	35
Female	32	29
Age		
13 or 14	34	31
15-17	35	32
Race		
White	33	29
Black	42	44
Socioeconomic status		
Upper/upper-middle	30	25
Lower-middle	39	34
Lower	42	52
Region		
Northeast	45	33
Midwest	28	24
South	32	32
West	35	39
Type of school		
Public	37	34
Non-public	15	18

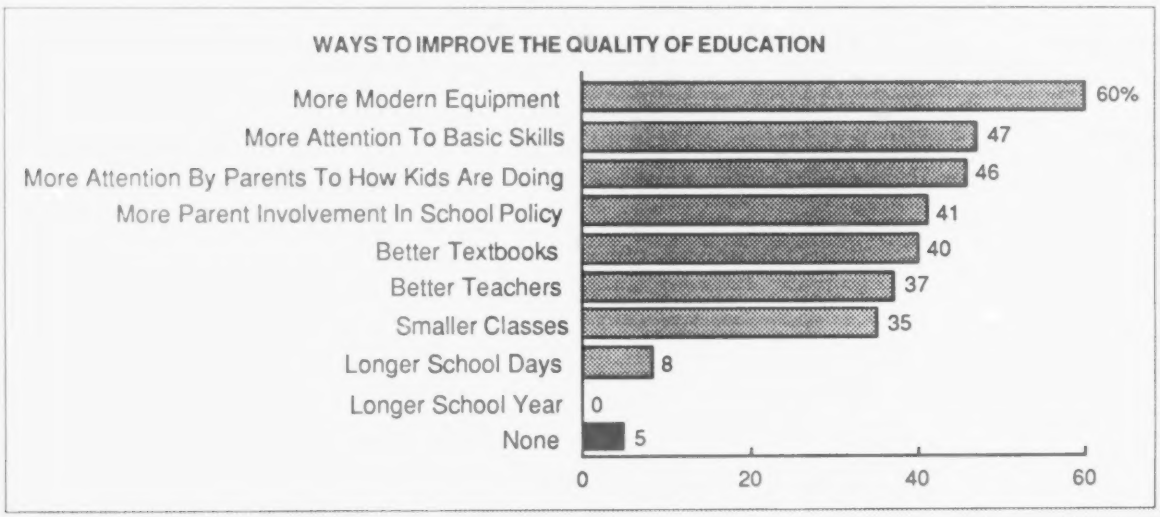
3

The high percentage of students who say they have peers being promoted to a higher grade undeservedly, or who cannot read or write adequately, sheds light on the source of adults' concerns about the educational system. While students paint a rosy picture of school in terms of satisfaction and give fairly high grades to it, there appears to be reason for worry. Do today's students recognize this problem?

When presented with a list of items that could improve the quality of education in their own schools, over half say at least one of the items would improve the quality of their schools, and just under half name several other items on the list, one of which is a call for more attention to the basics. This would appear to indicate there is indeed a recognition of room for improvement.

Six in ten of those polled say more modern equipment--computers, VCR's, film projectors -- would improve their school. Almost half call for more attention to the teaching of basic skills -- a possible recognition of some students being promoted undeservedly and not being able to read or write adequately. An almost equal percentage say more attention by parents to what their children are learning and how well they are doing would improve their schools. Four in ten cite more involvement by parents in what is taught in schools and the way schools are run and better textbooks as ways to improve their school. Over one third name better teachers and smaller classes. There is very little enthusiasm for making the school day longer or making the school year longer.

There appear to be two areas deserving of concentration: one concerns parents, and the other concerns teachers. As noted above, today's students want greater involvement on the part of their parents in two respects -- in terms of what they are learning and how they are doing in school, and with regard to school policies such as curriculum design and school administration.



Most demographic subgroups are in basic agreement on both of these points, although there are differences in degree.

Females are more likely than males to want their parents to pay more attention to what they are doing, but equal percentages of both want their parents more involved in the school itself. Over half of females (51%) want parents to pay more attention to what their kids are doing in school, as compared with 4 in 10 males (41%).

Teenagers, too, are more likely to want greater parental attention to what they are doing in school than their younger counterparts, but equal percentages of both want more parent involvement in curriculums and school administration. Half of 13 to 17 year olds (50%) want parents to pay more attention to what they are learning in school, as compared with 4 in 10 of their younger counterparts.

An equal percentage of blacks and whites seek more attention from their parents, but blacks are more likely than whites to want their parents to become involved in the design of the curriculum and the administration of the schools. Approximately half of the black students (49%) want more parental involvement, as compared with 4 in 10 whites (39%).

Those in the low socioeconomic groups are less likely than their upscale counterparts to want either kind of parental involvement. Slightly less than 4 in 10 in the lowest group (38%) want more attention paid to what they are doing, as compared with roughly half of those in the upper middle and upper groups (48%). Similary, a third of the downscale (34%) seek more parental involvement in the curriculum and administration, as compared with roughly 4 in 10 of those in the other three socioeconomic groups.

Not surprisingly, public school attendees are more likely than those in non-public schools to want more parental attention to themselves and their schools. Just under half of those in public schools (47%) want more attention from parents to what they are doing, as compared with a third of those in non-public schools (35%). Similarly, 4 in 10 public school attendees want more parental involvement in curriculum and administration as compared with a third of those who attend non-public schools (35%). This may reflect more involvement already on the part of parents who are paying for private education for their children.

We have also noted with respect to teachers that today's young people would like more emphasis on teaching the basics. Furthermore, one third of students call for better teachers. The various demographic subgroups are again in basic agreement, but there are differences in degree.

Those aged 13 to 17 are more likely than their younger counterparts to want more attention to basics and better teachers. Half of those aged 13 to 17 (50%) cite more attention to basics as a way of improving their schools, as compared with 4 in 10 of those aged 8 to 12 (43%). This may reflect a greater attention to the basics in primary schools today as a reaction to the lack of attention they received several years ago, or a perception on the part of teenagers that basic skills are critical to whatever path they have set for themselves after school. More teenagers call for better teachers than their younger counterparts (42% vs. 30%).

Blacks are more likely than their white counterparts to want both more attention to basics and better teachers -- possibly another reflection of the more critical role blacks see for the educational system as a whole. A majority of blacks (52%) as compared with a plurality of whites (45%) want more attention to basics. Similarly, over 4 in 10 blacks (45%) as compared with over 3 in 10 whites (35%) call for better teachers.

The upscale are more likely to call for more attention to basics while the downscale want better teachers. Roughly half of those in the upper and upper-middle socioeconomic groups (46%) and lower middle group (50%) would like more attention to basics; 38% of those in the lowest group agree. Conversely, 44% of those in the lowest group call for better teachers, but only a third of those in the upper-middle and upper groups (34%) share that opinion.

Public school students are more likely to call for better teachers but they agree with their non-public school counterparts on the need to return to basics. Over one third of those in public schools (37%) feel better teachers would improve their school, and under one third of those in non-public schools (30%) agree.

While there are differences in the degree of feeling, many of today's students see room for improvement despite the rosy picture they paint with regard to "their school." More involvement on the part of parents in what students are learning in school, in developing curricula, and in school administration are called for by students. While better teachers would help to some extent, a greater emphasis is placed on beefing up the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. More equipment which typifies the world of today's young people, such as computers, VCRs, and other audio-visual equipment, will also help improve today's schools. This equipment might also be seen as more fun, and a more direct way of learning.

3

After School: College And Career Aspirations

Today's students display some ambiguity toward their schools. On the one hand, they like school and are satisfied with it. Students also give their schools an above average grade of "B". On the other hand, they acknowledge that some students are promoted to higher grades when they should be left back, and that others cannot read or write adequately. Students recognize that there is room for improvement. They call for more attention to teaching the basics and greater parental involvement in the educational system. Yet, despite this apparent ambiguity toward school, a majority of students plan to continue in the educational system. Fully 8 in 10 (80%) say they intend to enroll in college when they finish high school. If these expectations are fulfilled, this generation will be by far the most educated in our nation's history.

Youngsters have also begun developing their plans for when they finish school. In fact, nearly 7 in 10 say they know already what they want to be when they grow up and their aspirations and ambitions. Jobs in health and medical care are the most popular. Jobs in the trades, teaching sports and athletics, and arts and entertainment also finish high on the list. More than in any other area explored in the survey, there are sharp differences in the career aspirations of boys and girls.

Fully 8 out of 10 young people say they plan to attend college after they finish high school. This level of interest in a college education is uniformly high across all demographic groups. It is highest among:

Students whose parents attended college -- either both parents (92%) or one parent (89%).

Students who currently attend non-public schools (89%).

Students from the highest socioeconomic stratum (87%).

Older teens (15 to 17 year olds), who are approaching college age, are somewhat less likely than the younger age group to say they plan to go to college, although as many as three-quarters (75%) do expect to receive higher education.

PLANS REGARDING COLLEGE

	Plan to attend college	*Do not plan attend college*	*Don't know*
Total	80%	11%	9%
Sex			
Male	78	12	10
Female	82	10	7
Age			
8-12 (net)	83	7	10
8-10	82	7	11
11,12	83	7	10
13-17 (net)	78	14	7
13,14	83	10	6
15-17	75	17	8
Race			
White	81	10	8
Black	76	16	9
Socioeconomic status			
Upper/upper-middle	87	7	6
Lower middle	76	13	10
Lower	71	17	11
Region			
Northeast	82	11	7
Midwest	81	9	10
South	79	13	8
West	81	10	10
Type of school			
Public	79	12	9
Non-public	89	2	9
Parents attend college			
Neither	68	19	12
One	86	8	6
Both	92	4	4
Attitudes toward school			
Like	84	9	7
Dislike	68	24	9

3

Fully 69% of today's students say they know what they want to be when they finish school. This cuts evenly across all demographic subgroups.

The most preferred jobs, by far, are those in health care; 16% in total, seek careers in this area. This splits about evenly between those who would like to be doctors (7%) and those who would like to be nurses (5%). A few votes were also cast for veterinary medicine (2%), psychology (1%), and dentistry (1%).

Jobs in health care are particularly appealing to black children. Fully one in five black students (20%) seek careers in this area -- 11% hope to be doctors, and 7% would like to be nurses.

This is followed by various blue collar jobs or jobs in the trades (such as construction, electrician, beautician, etc., mentioned collectively by 8%) teaching (7%); arts and entertainment (6%); and sports and athletics (6%).

This question, more than any other in the survey, produces sharp differences between boys and girls. For girls, fully 24% would like to enter the health care field -- 10% as nurses, 8% as doctors, and the remainder in other miscellaneous capacities. Teaching falls next on girls' hierachy of occupational preferences, cited by 13%. Blue collar jobs or jobs in the trades (9%), arts and entertainment (6%), and design/fashion (6%) round out this list.

For boys, no one or two fields stand out like they do for girls. Careers in sports and athletics (particularly football) carry the most allure, cited by 10%. Jobs in medicine (8%), the trades (8%), science and engineering (8%), the military (7%), police or fire protection (6%), and arts/entertainment (5%) round out boys' diffuse list of career choices.

As we saw earlier, most of today's students feel that computer skills are important to learn. Students seem to recognize that computer skills will play an important role in almost any career they choose to undertake. They realize that success in our advanced economy increasingly depends on knowledge and usage of high technology tools. But the use of computers doesn't limit one to a job in computers, per se. And, interestingly, despite the *current* allure of jobs in the field of computers, only 3% (of either sex) say they wish to pursue a career directly in computers.

CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF AMERICAN YOUTH

	Total %	Sex: Boys %	Sex: Girls %
Medical/health care	16	8	24
Trade/blue collar	8	8	9
Teaching	7	2	13
Arts/entertainment	6	5	6
Sports/athletics	6	10	-
Military	4	7	2
Science/engineering	4	8	1
Design/fashion	3	-	6
Police/fire protection	3	6	-
Computer	3	3	3
Aviation	3	6	-
Business/finance	3	2	4
Law	3	2	4
News/journalism	1	1	2
Architect	1	2	-
Don't Know	31	34	28

Chapter Four:

Between Home And School: American Youth Vote On Social Issues

The American Chicle Youth Poll

The Roper Organization Inc.

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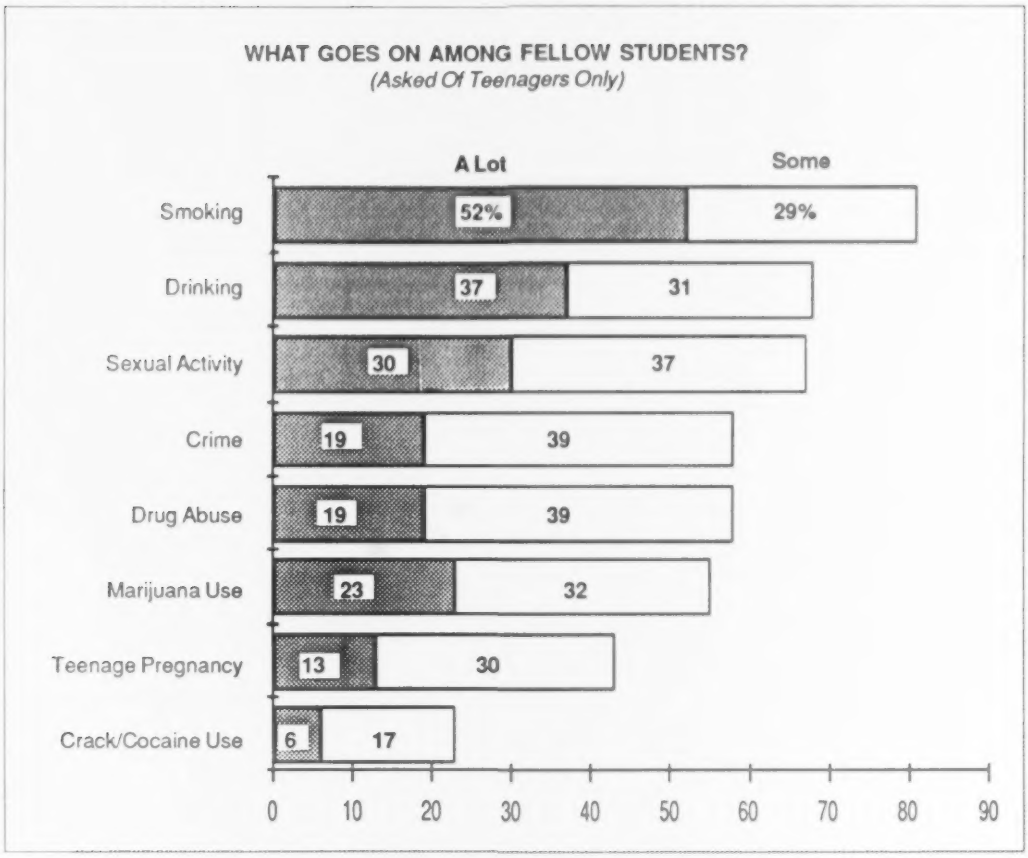

WHAT GOES ON AMONG FELLOW STUDENTS?
(Asked Of Teenagers Only)
A Lot
Some
Smoking
52%
29%
Drinking
37
31
Sexual Activity
30
37
Crime
19
39
Drug Abuse
19
39
Marijuana Use
23
32
Teenage Pregnancy
13
30
Crack/Cocaine Use
6
17
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90

4

How Widespread Are Social Problems Facing Students?

We hear more and more these days about the rising extent of substance abuse in our country. The media are filled with stories of the horrors of crack and cocaine. More and more public service commercials are run on television encouraging our young people not to drink and drive. A second area of growing concern is teenage pregnancy. A great debate currently rages over how best to deal with this problem. Some are calling for increased sex education in the schools, while others say it should remain in the home. These are all issues that affect today's schools and young people. We therefore set out to discover their impressions of their peers and the incidence of such things as drug use, alcohol use, sexual promiscuity and teenage pregnancy, and crime.

We gave a list of various social problems to the 13 to 17 year olds (only) and asked whether each one occurs a lot, some, or very little among the students in their school. Over half of today's young people say that at least some smoking, drinking, sexual activity, crime, drug abuse, and marijuana use occurs.

Eight in ten students (81%) say at least some smoking occurs among their peers, and over half (52%) say it occurs a lot. Over two-thirds say at least some drinking (68%) and sexual activity (67%) goes on. Over one third (37%) say a lot of drinking takes place, and just under one-third (30%) say a lot of sexual activity takes place. Over half say at least some crime (58%), drug abuse (58%), and marijuana use (55%) occurs. Roughly one quarter say a lot of marijuana use (23%) goes on, while 2 in 10 say this about crime and drug abuse. Four in ten say that at least some teeange pregnancy (43%) occurs, and one in eight (13%) say it happens a lot. One quarter say there is at least some cocaine and crack use (23%), and 1 in 17 (6%) say it goes on a lot. These figures are all striking, particularly since these are activities that ideally should not be engaged in at all.

4

There are some interesting differences in perception among the demographic subgroups.

Females are more likely than males to say that each of the listed activities, except crime, occurs a lot or some. Of particular interest are the answers on teenage pregnancy. Over half of females (52%) say this occurs a lot or some as compared with only a third of males (34%). This undoubtedly reflects greater awareness on the part of females about this problem, as they are more likely to know what is going on with other females than are their male counterparts.

The 15 to 17 year olds are more likely than 13 or 14 year olds to say that all the things asked about occur at least some of the time among their peers. This probably reflects the increased likelihood of engaging in these activities as one grows older. Furthermore, this implies that these types of activities are much more prevalent in high school than junior high school.

Whites are more likely to say smoking and drinking occur at least some among their peers, and blacks are more likely to say that crime and teenage pregnancy occur at least some in their schools. Eight in ten whites (84%), as compared with 7 in 10 blacks (72%), say smoking occurs among their schoolmates. Similarly, 7 in 10 whites (72%), as compared with just under 6 in 10 blacks (57%) say drinking occurs to some degree among their peers. Seven in ten blacks (68%) say crime occurs to some degree compared with roughly 6 in 10 whites (56%). Two-thirds of blacks (66%) say teenage pregnancy occurs to some degree, compared with 4 in 10 whites (39%).

The socioeconomic groups are in basic agreement as to the degree to which these various types of behavior occur, with two exceptions. Drinking appears to occur to a greater degree among upscale respondents, while teenage pregnancy appears to be more prevalent among the downscale. Seven in ten of those in the two highest groups (69%) say there is at least some drinking, while 6 in 10 of those in the lowest groups say there is at least some. Slightly more than a third of those in the two highest income groups (36%) say that there is at least some teenage pregnancy, compared with 6 in 10 of those in the lowest income group.

There appears to be much less activity of the type discussed--often a third to a half less--in non-public schools than in public schools.

4

WHAT GOES ON AMONG FELLOW STUDENTS

(A Lot/Some Combined, Teenagers Only)

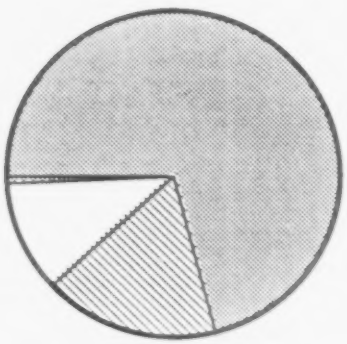
	Smoking	Drinking	Sexual Activity	Marijuana Use	Crime	Drug Abuse	Teen Pregnancy	Use of Cocaine/ Crack
Total	81%	68%	67%	55%	58%	58%	43%	23%
Sex								
Male	78	65	65	53	61	55	34	19
Female	85	71	69	57	55	61	52	26
Age								
13 or 14	69	49	51	39	54	44	29	15
15-17	89	80	77	65	61	66	51	28
Race								
White	84	72	68	57	56	59	39	22
Black	72	57	67	55	68	60	66	26
Socioeconomic status								
Upper/upper-middle	83	69	69	55	54	58	36	23
Lower-middle	81	67	67	56	60	59	46	23
Lower	69	59	64	51	62	58	60	18
Region								
Northeast	89	72	67	60	55	63	44	25
Midwest	79	72	69	53	54	52	39	16
South	81	64	68	52	61	57	51	22
West	76	64	63	57	61	64	29	30
Type of school								
Public	84	70	69	57	61	61	46	25
Non-public	57	51	51	33	33	32	14	11

4

Discipline In The Schools

It would appear that the amount of substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, and teenage pregnancy is not seen to result from a lack of discipline in school. When asked whether discipline in their school is too strict, not strict enough or about right, a large majority say it is about right. So what should be done? An overwhelming majority of teenage students feel that schools should not have the right to use corporal punishment. However, bare majorities feel that schools should have the right to search students belongings, lockers or cars for drugs, alcohol, and weapons.

AMOUNT OF DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOL



LEGEND:	
About Right	71%
Too Strict	17
Not Strict Enough	11
Don't Know	1

Seven in ten of today's students (71%) say discipline in their school is about right. Under 2 in 10 say discipline is too strict (17%), and 1 in 10 say discipline is not strict enough (11%).

Most demographic subgroups are in agreement on this point. However there are a few interesting differences.

Males are more likely than females to say discipline in their schools is too strict, by a three-to-two margin (21% to 14%). This no doubt reflects a higher degree of rebelliousness on the part of males.

Blacks are more likely than whites to say discipline is not strict enough: 2 in 10 blacks (19%) say discipline in their schools is not strict enough, as compared with 1 in 10 whites (9%).

Teenagers were asked whether schools should or should not have the right to take various disciplinary actions. An overwhelming majority (81%) feel schools should not have the right to spank or physically discipline students. A bare majority (51%) feel they should not have the right to ban books which they feel are unsuitable for students. However, bare majorities feel schools *should* have the right to search student's lockers, belongings, or cars for drugs and liquor (51%) and weapons (59%).

Most demographic subgroups are in agreement. However, regionally there are some interesting differences.

Majorities in the South feel schools should have the right to ban books that are deemed unsuitable (54%), and search students lockers and belongings for drugs or liquor (56%) and weapons (61%). Further, more students in the South (33%) than nationwide (18%) feel schools should have the right to physically discipline or spank students.

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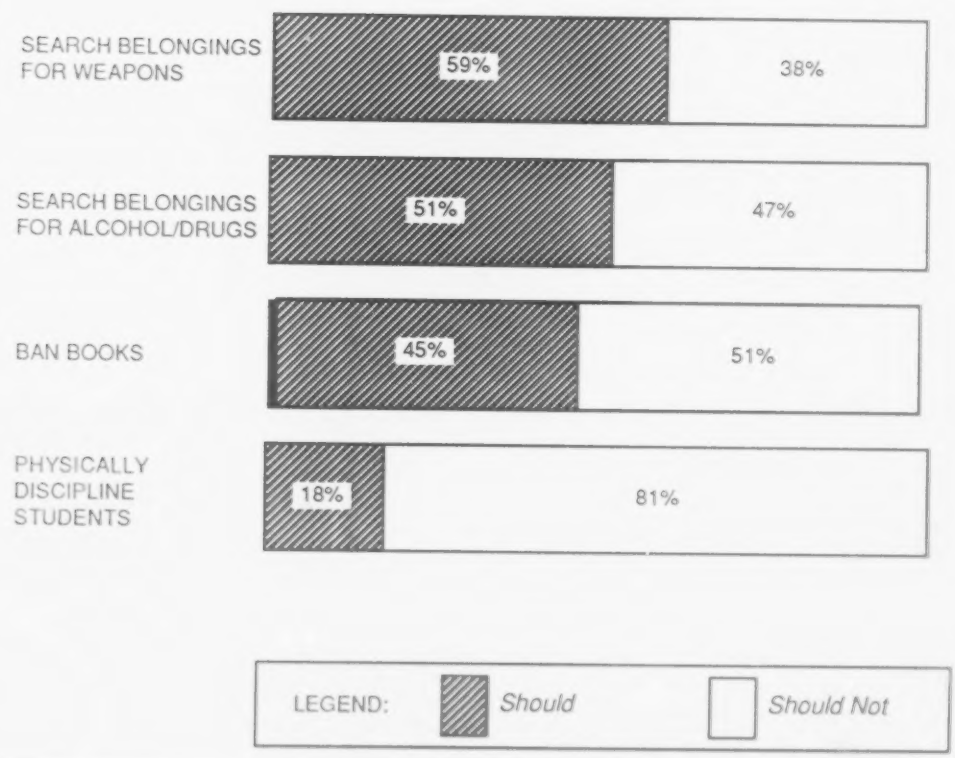
Majorites in the Midwest feel schools should have the right to search students belongings and lockers for drugs or liquor (57%) and weapons (66%). On the question of banning books, they are evenly split: 48% feel they should have the right to do so, 46% feel they should not.

In the Northeast, majorites feel schools should not have the right to spank students (93%), to ban books (58%), or to search student's lockers and belongings for drugs or alcohol (61%). They are evenly split on the question of searching students lockers or belongings for weapons: 49% say they should have the right to do so, 48% think they should not.

SCHOOLS SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO:
(Asked of Teenagers Only)



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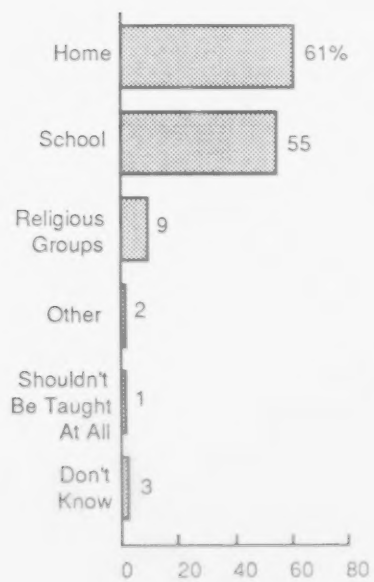
Sex Education

There is a great deal of discussion these days about the role schools should play in sex education. Many have criticized current sex education programs in schools for their overemphasis on "technical" aspects, and their lack of attention to morality. And many feel that sex education is best taught in the home. Majorities of today's teenagers feel that sex education should be taught in homes and in schools. One third of all students say they have sex education classes in school, and a large majority of them say the classes are good.

In light of the growing controversy over whether sex education should be taught at home or in school, teenagers were asked where they think it is best taught. With multiple answers allowed, 61% say it should be taught in the home. A slightly lower percentage named schools (55%). Religious groups were named by 1 in 10 (9%). Only 1% volunteered that sex education should not be taught.

WHERE SHOULD SEX EDUCATION BE TAUGHT?
(Teenagers Only)



The various demographic subgourps are in basic agreement. Larger percentages tend to mention home than mention school, except:

A higher percentage of teenagers in the Northeast mention school. Over two-thirds of those living in the Northeast say sex education should be taught in school (68%), and half feel it should be taught in the home (49%).

All students were asked if their schools offered sex education classes, and one third said yes (34%).

Among most demographic subgroups roughly equal percentages have sex education courses in their school. The one exception, not surprisingly, is in the two age groups. Younger children (21%) are less likely to have sex education available to them than teenagers (46%).

Students who receive sex education in their school were asked whether they consider the classes to be good or not. Fully two thirds (67%) consider their sex education classes to be good, while 18% call them not good. Some demographic subgroups are more favorable than others.

When it comes to the quality of the classes, the ratio of "good" to "not good" is considerably higher for whites than for blacks. Almost five times as many whites say the classes are good (69%) as say they are not good (15%). Among blacks, the ratio less than 2 to 1: 51% of blacks label their classes "good," while 34% say they are "not good."

The same pattern applies among the socioeconomic groups. The more upscale the group, the higher the ratio of good-to-not good. Among those in the highest group, over seven times as

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many call the classes good (74%) as say they are not good (10%). Among those in the lowest group, 50% call the classes "good" and 42% say they are "not good."

Regionally, those living in the Northeast are less likely than their regional counterparts to see their sex education classes as good. Only twice as many Northeasterners call their classes good (53%) as call them not good (29%). Among those living in the other three regions, at least four times as many call their classes good rather than not good.

Non-public school students are much more positive than their public school counterparts. Among non-public school students, twelve times as many call their classes good (73%) as say they are not good (6%). Among public school students, three times as many call them good (66%) as call them not good (20%).

WHETHER SCHOOL OFFERS SEX EDUCATION CLASSES, AND ARE THEY GOOD?

	Offer Sex Education Classes	*And Classes Are Good*		*Ratio: Good / Not Good*
		Good	*Not Good*	
Total	34%	67%	18%	3.7
Sex				
Male	33	63	17	3.7
Female	36	70	19	3.7
Age				
8-12	21	56	22	2.5
13-17	46	71	16	4.4
Race				
White	34	69	15	4.6
Black	36	51	34	1.5
Socioeconomic status				
Upper/upper-middle	38	74	10	7.4
Lower-middle	31	63	23	2.7
Lower	30	50	42	1.2
Region				
Northeast	39	53	29	1.8
Midwest	37	70	13	5.4
South	27	66	16	4.1
West	36	78	13	6.0
Type School Attend				
Public	34	66	20	3.3
Non-Public	39	73	6	12.2

4

Drug And Alcohol Abuse Education

As noted earlier, there appears to be a great deal of substance abuse among today's young people. Increasingly, we see public service commercials on television telling young people about the horrors of drug use and abuse, or the dangers of driving while intoxicated. Furthermore, a growing number of schools are instituting programs to educate young people about drug and alcohol abuse. We found that just under half of today's students say their school offers such a program, and an overwhelming majority of these students feel the program is good.

In light of the current campaign to educate young people about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse, we asked whether their school offers drug and alcohol abuse education. Just under half (48%) said they do. Roughly equal percentages in all demographic subgroups say they receive drug and alcohol abuse education.

Students were also asked to evaluate the drug and alcohol abuse education their school provides. Fully three-quarters (75%) call the classes good, while slightly under 2 in 10 (18%) take the opposite viewpoint.

As with attitudes toward the quality of sex education classes, some subgroups are more favorable than others.

Once again, whites are more favorable than their black counterparts. Nearly five times as many whites call the drug and alcohol abuse education good (76%) as call it not good (16%). Among blacks, only twice as many call it good (64%) as call it not good (31%).

Similarly, the more upscale the student, the more likely he or she is to call the drug and alcohol abuse education good. Among those in the highest socioeconomic groups, over seven times as many call the classes good (74%) as say they are not good (10%). Among those in the lowest group, slightly more call the classes good (50%) as say the classes are not good (42%).

Regionally, the Midwest stands out for its favorable attitudes. Over eight times as many call the classes good (82%) as not good (10%). Among the other three regional groups three to four times as many call the classes good as not good.

Those in public schools are less likely than those in non-public schools to see the classes as good. Among public school students four times as many call the classes good (74%) as call them not good (19%). Ten times as many of the non-public schools call the classes good (80%) as call them not good (8%).

The reports of widespread substance abuse among today's

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young people appear to be well founded. Over half say there is at least some abuse of various substances in their school. Similarly, there appears to be a fair amount of sexual activity and a smaller amount of teenage pregnancy. Fortunately, many schools are offering drug and alcohol abuse education, and most students who receive these classes say they are good. A lower percentage of schools are offering sex education classes. However, most of the students receiving sex education at school call the classes good.

DOES SCHOOL OFFER DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE EDUCATION, AND IS THE EDUCATION GOOD?

	Offer Drug and Alcohol Abuse Education	*And Classes Are:*		*Ratio: Good Not Good*
		Good	*Not Good*	
Total	48%	75%	18%	4.2
Sex				
Male	46	74	17	4.4
Female	50	76	19	4.0
Age				
8-12	41	80	15	5.3
13-17	54	72	20	3.6
Race				
White	48	76	16	4.8
Black	44	64	31	2.1
Socioeconomic status				
Upper/upper-middle	51	77	15	5.1
Lower-middle	46	72	20	3.6
Lower	47	68	26	2.6
Region				
Northeast	57	69	23	3.0
Midwest	43	82	10	8.2
South	43	73	21	3.5
West	53	76	17	4.5
Type School Attend				
Public	49	74	19	3.9
Non-Public	41	80	8	10.0

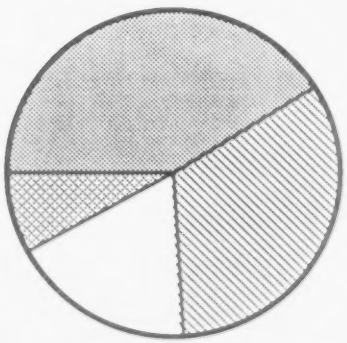
4

Socio-Political Issues Affecting Schools

Two areas of continuing controversy are prayer in the schools and busing to achieve racial integration. The question of whether or not to allow prayer in the public schools has been with us for a long time, and remains unresolved. Some call for organized prayer, others advocate a moment of silence, and still others oppose both. Busing, while less of an issue than in the 1970s, continues to be a topic of discussion now that plans implemented in the last decade can be examined for results. A third issue that first came to the public eye in the late 1970s is whether or not to allow homosexuals to teach in public schools. And most recently, AIDS has become an issue, as children with AIDS have tried to enroll in public schools and certain irate parents have tried to prevent this from happening. Since these are all issues facing today's schools and students, we decided to ask the students themselves for their opinions.

When asked whether today's public schools should or should not have organized prayers in the classroom, a 50% majority of students say they should not. However, a large minority of students (41%) say schools *should* have organized prayer -- an indication of the divisiveness of this issue. We then asked the students who oppose organized prayer in the classroom whether there should or should not be a moment of silence — 33% say there should be a moment of silence, while 18% feel there should be neither organized prayer nor a moment of silence.

ATTITUDES TOWARD PRAYER/ MOMENT OF SILENCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



LEGEND:	
Favor Prayer In School	41%
Favor Moment Of Silence	33
Oppose Both	18
Don't Know	7

Demographically, there are some interesting differences of opinion between the subgroups.

About half of those aged 8 to 12 say there should be orgainzed prayer in the classroom, while one quarter call for a moment of silence, and 15% oppose both. Among teenagers, a 39% plurality think schools should have a moment of silence, one third feel schools should have organized prayer (35%), and 21% oppose both.

A majority of blacks and a plurality of whites say there should be organized prayer in the classroom. Roughly 6 in 10 black students call for organized prayer, and another quarter of them feel there should be a moment of silence. Among whites, 4 in 10 call for organized prayer, and another third call for a moment of silence.

The more downscale the respondent, the more likely they are to advocate organized prayer in the classroom. A majority of those in the lowest socioeconomic group (52%) advocate organized prayer in the class room, compared with smaller pluralities of those in the upper or upper-middle groups (42%) and the lower-middle group (39%).

4

Regionally, Southerners are most likely to want organized prayer, Northeasterners a moment of silence, and Westerners are about split three ways on this issue.

Those in non-public schools (over half of whom are enrolled in parochial schools) are much more likely than those in public schools to advocate organized prayer in the classroom. Fully 75% of those in non-public schools favor organized prayer, while those in public schools are evenly split: 37% call for organized prayer, and 36% think there should be a moment of silence.

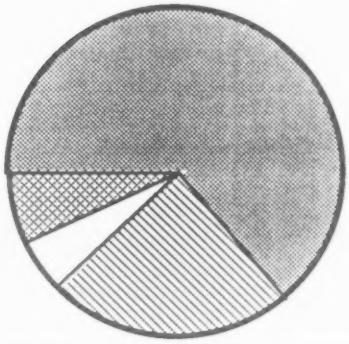
It would appear that prayer in the schools is as divisive among today's young people as among today's older folk.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS SHOULD HAVE:

	Organized Prayer	*Moment Of Silence*	*Neither*
Total	41%	33%	18%
Sex			
Male	42	32	18
Female	41	34	18
Age			
8-12	49	27	15
13-17	35	39	21
Race			
White	39	35	19
Black	59	26	10
Socioeconomic status			
Upper/upper-middle	42	33	20
Lower-middle	39	36	19
Lower	52	22	13
Region			
Northeast	30	42	18
Midwest	41	31	22
South	56	29	10
West	29	34	27
Type of school			
Public	37	36	20
Non-public	75	13	5

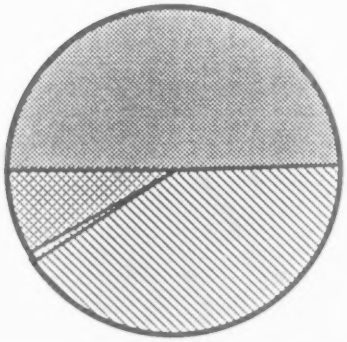
4

SHOULD THERE BE BUSING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO ACHIEVE RACIAL INTEGRATION?



LEGEND:	
Should	64%
Should Not	23
Don't Know What Busing Is	6
Don't Know	7

SHOULD HOMOSEXUALS BE ALLOWED TO TEACH IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS?
(Teenagers Only)



LEGEND:	
Should	49%
Should Not	41
Don't Know What Homosexuals Are	1
Don't Know	8

The question of busing to achieve racial integration does not appear nearly as divisive as school prayer. Nearly two-thirds of those interviewed (64%) say there should be busing to achieve racial integration. Slightly less than one quarter (23%) say there should be no busing, and 6% volunteer that they do not know what busing is.

There is a surprising unanimity of opinion among the demographic subgroups. Majorities in all of them think there should be busing. Both racially and regionally, where one might expect to find differences of opinion, there are none. Thus it would appear that busing to achieve racial integration is not as polarizing an issue among students today as it has been among adults in the past decade.

Students were also asked whether homosexuals should or should not be allowed to teach in the public school system. Roughly half think they should (49%); 4 in 10 think they should not (41%).

On this issue there are some interesting differences of opinion among the various demographic subgroups.

A plurality of males feel homosexuals should not be allowed to teach in public shcools, while a majority of females think they should. Slightly less than half of males (49%) feel homosexuals should not be allowed to teach in public schools.

Conversely, a majority of females (56%) think they should. This could reflect some apprehension on the part of males toward being around male homosexuals, and a recognition on the part of females of a lack of any kind of sexual threat.

A majority of whites feel homosexuals should be allowed to teach in public schools, and a plurality of blacks feel they should not. Over half of whites (52%) feel homosexuals should be allowed to teach in public schools. Only 38% of blacks agree.

The more upscale the individual, the more likely they are to feel that homosexuals should be allowed to teach in the public schools. Roughly half of those in the upper and upper middle socioeconomic groups (54%) and the lower middle (50%) say they should be allowed to teach in public schools. A majority of those in the lowest socioeconomic group (52%) feel homosexuals should be kept out of the public schools.

Regionally, the Northeast and Midwest are more favorably disposed than those in the South or West to allow homosexuals to teach in the public schools. Forty-nine percent of those in the Northeast and 57% of those in the Midwest say they should be allowed to teach in public schools. Southerners and Westerners are about evenly split -- 47% of Southerners say they should as compared with 45% who say they should not; in the West, equal percentages say they should (44%) and should not (44%).

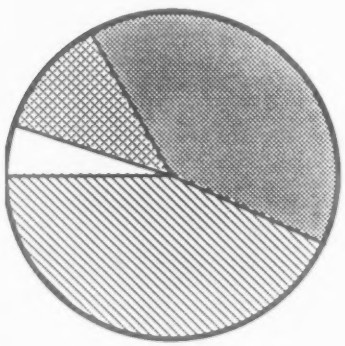
4

In light of the recent controversy over admitting students with AIDS to the public schools, we solicited the opinion of today's students on this issue. This too, appears to be a potentially divisive topic, with 40% saying students with AIDS should be admitted to school, and a slightly higher 43% saying they should not. One in twenty do not know what AIDS is.

Demographically, there are some interesting differences of opinion.

Males are more likely than their female counterparts to say these students should not be allowed to attend public schools. A plurality of males (45%) say students with AIDS should not be allowed in the public schools, while 38% feel they should. Females are evenly split on this issue--42% feel they should be allowed in schools, 41% feel they should not.

SHOULD STUDENTS WITH AIDS BE ALLOWED TO ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOLS?



LEGEND:	
Should	40%
Should Not	43
Doesn't Know What AIDS Is	5
Don't Know	12

Those aged 8 to 12 are more likely to say students with AIDS should not be allowed in schools than are teenagers. A 4 in 10 plurality of those in the younger age group (42%) say students with AIDS should not be allowed in public schools, and one-third think they should (34%). Teenagers are evenly split on the issue--46% feel they should be allowed in the schools, 44% feel they should not. This attitude on the part of the primary school students may be a result of the high percentage who do not know what AIDS is (9%) and the higher percentage of those who do not know if they should be admitted to public schools (16%).

Blacks are more likely than whites to say AIDS victims should not be allowed into public schools. A majority of blacks (55%) say students with AIDS should not be admitted to public schools. Whites are evenly divided: 42% feel they should be admitted, 41% feel they should not.

Regionally, the Northeast, South and West disagree with the Midwest. A majority of students in the Midwest (53%) feel that students with AIDS should be allowed to attend public schools. In the Northeast (46%) and West (44%), pluralities feel students afflicted with AIDS should not be allowed into public schools. In the South, a majority (51%) feels this way.

In summary, it would appear that prayers and allowing students with AIDS to attend public schools are the more divisive issues among today's students. There is widespread agreement on the issue of school busing, and to a lesser extent on the issue of allowing homosexuals to teach in the public schools.

METHODOLOGY

Sample Size

A nationwide cross-section of 1000 American young people, aged 8 to 17, and attending school, were interviewed for the 1987 American Chicle Youth Poll.

Sampling Method

All interviews were conducted in person in the homes of respondents and the work of all interviewers was validated by telephone. Interviews were conducted between November 15, 1986 and November 26, 1986. The sample of youth interviewed in this study is representative of the population of 8 to 17 year olds attending school in the Continental United States. A three-stage, stratified probability sample of interviewing locations was employed.

Stage one - After all the counties in the nation had been stratified by population size within each geographic region, 100 counties were selected at random proportionate to population.

Stage two - Cities and towns within the sample counties were drawn at random proportionate to population.

Stage three - Where census tract statistics within cities and towns were available, tracts were selected at random proportionate to population; where no statistics were available, rural route segments were drawn at random.

Interviewers were then given starting points at which to begin interviewing within the census tract or rural route segment. To ensure proper representation of each group in the sample, quotas were imposed for sex and age levels of respondents. While the assigned quotas produced the correct number of males and females aged 8 to 12 and 13 to 17, there were small imbalances when the sample was examined in finer age terms, e.g. too few 8 to 10 year olds, too many 11 or 12 year olds. Accordingly, the sample was weighted to achieve the correct proportions of males and females 8 to 10, 11 or 12, 13 or 14, and 15 to 17.

The Questionnaire

For the most part, the questionnaires for 8 to 12 year olds and 13 to 17 year olds were identical. Certain questions, pertinent or suitable only for older respondents were not asked of younger respondents. A copy of the questionnaire can be found at the end of this report.

METHODOLOGY

Demographic Breakdowns

For all questions, the responses of various demographic subgroups were broken out. The major demographic variables are shown in the table that follows.

	Unweighted Number	Weighted Percentage
TOTAL	1000	100 %
SEX		
Male	512	51 %
Female	488	49
AGE		
8 to 12 (net)	469	47 %
8 to 10	247	28
11 or 12	222	19
13 to 17 (net)	531	53
13 or 14	224	21
15 to 17	307	32
RACE		
White	789	79 %
Black	149	15
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS		
Upper/upper-middle	407	41 %
Lower-middle	417	42
Lower	122	12
REGION		
Northeast	220	22 %
Midwest	260	26
South	330	33
West	190	19
SIZE OF FAMILY		
None or 1 sibling	388	39 %
2 or 3 siblings	455	45
4 or more siblings	157	16

METHODOLOGY

LIVE WITH:		
Both natural parents	632	64 %
One natural/ one step-parent	106	11
One parent only	229	23
MOTHER'S EMPLOYMENT STATUS		
Full-time	458	46 %
Part-time	252	25
Not employed	257	26
BEEN THROUGH DIVORCE		
Yes	254	25 %
No	746	75
TYPE OF SCHOOL		
Public	877	88 %
Non-Public	121	12

Questionnaire

ALL BOXED QUESTIONS OR BOXED ITEMS IN QUESTIONS ARE ASKED OF 13 TO 17 YEAR OLDS ONLY

NOVEMBER 1986 COUNTY _____ PLACE _____ Place # __

Time started _____ AM.. 1 18/ PM.. 2 Time finished _____ AM PM Total minutes _____ 19/20
14/15/16/17

Hello, I'm from The Roper Organization, a national public opinion polling firm, and we're conducting a survey among school children ages 8 to 17. Are there any such children in this household?

IF "YES"--CHECK QUOTAS AND RECRUITE

IF "NO"--TERMINATE

Hello, I'm (name) from The Roper Organization. We're conducting a survey about various things affecting young people such as yourself, and would like to ask you a few questions.

1. To begin with, I'd like to know, how do you like living in this (town/city)? Would you say you like it a lot, a little, or not too much?

A lot	69
A little	23
Not too much	8
Don't know (vol.)	-

2. Here is a list of things. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD) Some of the things on that list are things which make people feel good; others are things which don't really have that effect. As I read each item, please tell me whether it is the kind of thing which does or does not make you personally feel good.

	Does	Does not	Somewhere in between (vol.)	Don't know
a. The school you go to	78	11	10	1
b. The neighborhood where you live	79	12	8	1
c. Being an American	95	3	2	1
d. The clothes you have	85	9	6	1
e. The amount of money you have to spend	63	25	10	2
f. Singing the Star Spangled Banner	59	23	11	7
g. What your parents do for a living	86	7	5	2
h. The friends you have	92	3	4	1
i. How you get along with your family	85	7	7	1

Now let's talk about the privileges young people have today.

3. Who do you think have more privileges today--boys or girls?

Boys	50
Girls	26
About the same (vol.)	19
Don't know	5

4. Who do you think have more privileges when they grow up--men or women?

Men	55
Women	19
About the same (vol.)	19
Don't know	7

5. Do you think that people generally put more pressure on boys or more pressure on girls to do well in school?

Boys	45
Girls	33
About the same (vol.)	19
Don't know	4

6. Do you think that people generally put more pressure on boys or more pressure on girls to get a good job after they are finished with school?

Boys	67
Girls	14
About the same (vol.)	17
Don't know	2

7. Do you know what you want to be or do when you grow up/after you finish school?

Yes..... 69 (ASK 8)

No..... 31 (SKIP TO 9)

8. What is that?

_____ 36-

_____ 37-

_____ 38-

_____ 39-

9. Now, here is a list (HAND RESPONDENT CARD) and, for each one I'd like you to tell me how old you feel people should be before they make their own decisions on those things. First, (read each item), how old do you think people should be to make their own decisions? (ASK ABOUT EACH ITEM)

	14 and under	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Over 21	Don't know
a. Choosing their own clothes	84	9	4	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
b. Whether or not to drink beer and wine	3	5	11	6	30	5	5	20	12	3
c. Whether or not to drink liquor	3	4	8	5	26	5	6	27	13	3
d. Getting married	-	-	3	4	35	7	14	12	19	4
e. Whether or not to quit school	2	3	31	14	32	4	2	3	4	6
f. Whether or not to have sex	8	10	20	11	24	4	5	3	6	9
g. Staying out at night as late as they want	10	9	24	16	26	5	3	2	3	2
h. Whether or not to smoke marijuana	3	5	10	6	23	5	6	11	15	14
i. Whether or not to buy pornography	5	4	10	6	28	4	7	12	11	13

9A. Here is a list of things some young people have told us they are concerned about today. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD) Would you please read down that list and for each thing tell me if it is something you personally are very concerned about, sort of concerned about, or not really concerned about at all? First, (read item). (ASK ABOUT EACH)

	Very concerned	Sort of concerned	Not really concerned	Don't know
a. Pollution of our air and water	47	38	13	2
b. The use of drugs by professional athletes	52	25	20	3
c. The possibility of nuclear war	65	20	12	3
d. The spread of the disease called AIDS	65	20	10	5
e. The increasing number of divorces among parents	39	33	25	3
f. The possibility that you may someday have to fight in a war	47	26	25	2
g. The kidnapping of children and teenagers	76	16	8	1

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about school.

10. Generally speaking, do you like school, or don't you like it?

Like school	77	Mixed feelings, in between (vol.)	12
Don't like school	10	Don't know	-

11. Are you generally satisfied or not satisfied with the school you go to now?

Satisfied	84	Mixed feelings, in between (vol.)	7
Not satisfied	8	Don't know	1

12. Here is another list. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD) Would you tell me which one of those four items you would say is the most important thing about school to you personally?

a. The subjects you learn	53
b. The friends you make	17
c. The activities outside of class such as band, sports, drama club	8
d. Learning how to get along with other people	19
Don't know	3

13. Suppose you had to give your school a letter grade, like the kind you get on a report card, where "A" is the best grade and an "F" is the worst grade. Considering everything about your school, such as the teachers, the classes, the other students, and so on, what letter grade would you give your school--an A, B, C, D, or F?

A	29	D	4
B	48	F	2
C	16	Don't know	1

14. Now I'd like you to grade these specific things about your school. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD) I want you to give a grade for each thing on that list. Once again, an "A" is the best grade and an "F" is the worst grade. Let's start with (read each item). Would you give it a grade of A, B, C, D, or F?

	A	B	C	D	F	Doesn't apply (vol.)	Don't know (vol.)
a. The quality of most of your teachers	41	39	15	3	2		1
b. The sports and gym classes	46	32	12	3	3	3	2
c. The school library	43	32	15	4	2	1	3
d. How well you and most of your teachers get along	50	30	12	4	3		1
e. The cafeteria food	16	20	25	13	18	5	2
f. The boys in your school	29	39	20	6	5	1	1
g. The girls in your school	37	41	15	4	3	-	1
h. How safe you feel in school	60	26	9	2	1		-
i. The teaching of basic skills, such as reading, writing and arithmetic	58	29	8	1	1		1
j. Helping you become a good citizen	52	28	13	3	1		2
k. The type of elective courses which your school offers	39	39	13	6	1		2
l. Preparing students for college, for those who want to go to college	47	34	11	3	2		3
m. Preparing students to get a job, for those who want to work after high school	41	39	14	2	2		2

15. Do you think most of your teachers expect too much from you, too little, or about the right amount?

Too much	19
Too little	4
Right amount	75
Don't know	1

16. When it comes to school, do you think your parents expect too much from you, too little, or about the right amount?

Too much	22
Too little	3
Right amount	74
They differ (vol.)	1
Don't know	-

17. How do you feel about the amount of homework you have to do each day? Would you say you are given too much homework, too little, or about the right amount of homework?

Too much	25
Too little	12
Right amount	62
Don't know	1

79-0
80-1

18. Here is a list of subjects you might study in school. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD) I'd like to find out which you feel are important for you personally to take and which are not. Let's start with (read each item). Do you feel it is an important subject for you to take or not? (ASK ABOUT EACH ITEM)

ASKED OF 8 TO 12 YEAR OLDS ONLY

	Important	Not important	Don't know
a. Arithmetic	92	6	2
b. Reading and grammar	92	7	1
c. Physical education/gym	66	30	4
d. Foreign languages	51	39	10
e. History	80	16	4
f. Science	86	12	2
g. Current events and social studies	80	16	4
h. Geography	71	20	8
i. Music	48	49	3
j. Art	52	44	4
k. Typing	54	37	9
l. Computer skills	81	14	6

(NO COLS. 19-23 THIS FORM)

18. Here is a list of subjects you might study in school. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD) I'd like to find out which you feel are important for you personally to take and which are not. Let's start with (read each item). Do you feel it is an important subject for you to take or not? (ASK ABOUT EACH ITEM)

	Important	Not important	Don't know
a. Math	94	6	-
b. English	91	8	1
c. Physical education/gym	49	49	2
d. Foreign languages	53	45	2
e. History	75	23	2
f. Chemistry	53	43	3
g. Current events and social studies	80	18	2
h. Geography	67	31	2
i. Home economics, such as sewing and cooking	47	52	1
j. Shop, such as woodworking, metalworking, auto mechanics	52	46	2
k. Biology	70	27	2
l. Music	36	62	2
m. Art	36	62	2
n. Typing	69	29	2
o. Computer skills	88	11	1
p. Physics	59	36	5
q. Psychology	61	33	6

19. Here is a list of ideas which have been suggested to improve the quality of education. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD) Would you read down that list, and any time you come to one you think would improve the quality of education in <u>your</u> school, tell me?

a. Making the school day longer	8
b. More modern equipment, such as computers, VCRs, film projectors, etc	60
c. More attention to the teaching of basic skills, such as reading, writing and arithmetic	47
d. More involvement by parents in what is taught in schools and the way schools are run	41
e. Smaller classes	35
f. Better teachers	37
g. More attention by parents to what their children are learning and how they are doing in school	46
h. Better text books	40
i. Making the school year longer	-
None	5
Don't know	2

20. OMITTED (NO COL.25)

21. Here is a list of things that we hear go on in certain schools. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD) Thinking about the students in your school--not just the ones you know--for each thing on the card would you tell me if there is a lot of it among the students in your school, some of it, or very little of it? First, (<u>read item</u>)? (ASK ABOUT EACH ITEM)

	A lot	Some	Very little	Don't know
a. Smoking	52	29	18	1
b. Drinking	37	31	28	4
c. Drug abuse	19	39	38	4
d. Crime, such as stealing, vandalism, etc	19	39	39	4
e. Marijuana use	23	32	38	7
f. The use of cocaine or crack	6	17	61	16
g. Sexual activity	30	37	27	7
h. Teenage pregnancy	13	30	50	7
i. Students being promoted to the next grade when they really don't deserve to be	11	24	56	9
j. Students who can't read or write adequately	8	24	60	8

22. Is the discipline in your school generally too strict, not strict enough, or about right?

Too strict	17
Not strict enough	11
About right	71
Don't know	1

23. Do you feel schools should or should not have the right to do each of the things on this list? (HAND RESPONDENT CARD)

	Should	Should not	Don't know
a. Spank or physically discipline students	18	81	1
b. Ban books which they feel are unsuitable for students	45	51	4
c. Search students' lockers, belongings, or cars for drugs or liquor	51	47	2
d. Search students' lockers, belongings, or cars for weapons	59	38	3

24. Where do you think sex education should be taught--at home, in the schools, in religious groups, or where? (MAY MULTIPLE RECORD)

At home	61
In schools	55
In religious groups	9
Other (write in)_____	2
Shouldn't be taught at all (vol.)	1
Don't know (vol.)	3

25. Does your school offer sex education classes?

Yes	34	(ASK 26)
No	53	(SKIP TO 27)
Don't know	13	(SKIP TO 27)

26. From what you know or have heard, would you say the sex education classes in your school are good or not very good?

Good	67
Not very good	18
Don't know	15

27. Does your school offer drug and alcohol abuse education?

Yes	48	(ASK 28)
No	41	(SKIP TO 29)
Don't know	11	(SKIP TO 29)

28. From what you know or have heard, would you say the drug and alcohol abuse education in your school is good or not very good?

Good	75
Not very good	18
Don't know	7

29. Do you think public schools should or should not have organized prayer in class during the school day?

Should	41	(SKIP TO 31)
Should not	50	(ASK 30)
Don't know	8	(ASK 30)

30. Do you think public schools should or should not allow a moment of silence in class during the school day, during which students can pray if they wish?

Should	33
Should not	18
Don't know	7
Not asked	41

31. Do you think that there should or should not be busing in the public schools so that children of different races go to school together?

Should	64
Should not	23
Don't know what busing is (vol.)	6
Don't know	7

32. Do you think students with AIDS, should or should not be allowed to attend public school?

Should	40	Don't know what AIDS is (vol.)	5
Should not	43	Don't know	12

33. Do you feel homosexuals should or should not be allowed to teach in public schools if they are qualified?

Should	49	Don't know what homosexuals are (vol.)	1
Should not	41	Don't know	8

Now I'd like to talk with you about your family and home life.

34. Generally, would you say your home life is happy or not too happy?

Happy	90
Not too happy	8
Don't know	2

35. I'd like to know more specifically which things about your home life you are happy about and which you are not. For each of these items, (HAND RESPONDENT CARD), please tell me if you are happy about it or not too happy about it.

	Happy	Not happy	Mixed feelings, in between (vol.)	Does not apply (vol.)	Don't know (vol.)
a. The amount of work you have to do around the house	75	17	8	-	1
b. The size of your family	91	6	2	-	1
c. The amount of time your parent(s) spend with you	79	16	4	-	1
d. How well you get along with your brother(s) or sister(s)	62	21	8	6	1
e. The amount of love your parent(s) show you.	93	3	2	-	1

36. Thinking about the amount of time your family spends together as a whole, do you feel you spend too much time together, too little time or just the right amount of time together?

Too much time	3
Too little time	22
Right amount of time	74
Does not apply (vol.)	-
Don't know (vol.)	1

37. Regardless of how much time you spend together with your family, are the times you spend together generally times you enjoy a lot, a little, or not too much at all?

A lot	78
A little	15
Not too much	5
Don't know	2

38. What do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have?

One	3
Two	35
Three	27
Four	20
Five or more	10
None	-
Don't know	4

39. Now here is another list (HAND RESPONDENT CARD). For each item, I'd like you to tell me whether you feel your parents put too much importance on it, not enough, or just the right amount of importance on it? O.K., first, (read item)? (ASK ABOUT EACH ITEM)

	Too much	Not enough	Right amount	They differ (vol.)	Don't know
a. The kinds of food you eat	11	6	80	-	1
b. The amount of exercise you get	4	23	69	1	2
c. Your grades in school	24	6	69	-	1
d. Your participation in team sports	6	15	71	2	5
e. Your involvement in after-class school activities	5	20	67	1	7
f. Hobbies	5	15	74	1	5
g. Cultural activities such as going to museums, classical music events, and so on	4	27	59	2	7
h. The amount of television you watch	23	8	64	2	2
i. The kinds of TV programs you watch	16	9	72	2	1
j. What you will do or be after you finish school	11	10	74	-	4
k. The kinds of friends you have	15	5	77	1	2

40. Is the discipline in your home too strict, not strict enough, or about right?

Too strict	8
Not strict enough	4
About right	86
Don't know	1

79-0
80-2

41. Here is a list of some different things. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD) For each one, please tell me whether you feel that this is something about which you feel you can talk about comfortably with your parents or not?

	Can talk about	Cannot talk about	Sometimes, depends (vol.)	Don't know
a. School	94	4	2	1
b. Problems you have	76	16	7	1
c. Your friends	86	9	4	1
d. The way you and your parents get along	80	14	5	2
e. Your privacy	65	26	7	2
f. Religion	68	7	2	3
g. Clothing	94	4	2	1
h. Money	88	8	3	1
i. Drugs or drug use	80	15	3	3
j. Drinking or alcohol use	81	15	2	2
k. Dating and the people you date	72	20	5	3
l. Sex	59	32	5	4

42. Here is a list of things which various young people have told us would make their home life better. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD) Would you read down the list and any time you come to one that would make your home life better, please tell me?

a. Being able to talk openly with your parents about things which are important to you	39
b. If you and your brothers or sisters got along better	39
c. Spending more time with your parents	35
d. Spending less time with your parents	3
e. If your parents were more involved in your personal life	14
f. If your parents were less involved in your personal life	18
g. If your parents gave you more responsibility for things	32
h. If your parents didn't expect so much of you	23
i. If your parents treated you more as an adult	37
j. If your parents treated you less as an adult	6
k. If your family had more money	34
l. If your parents got along better	18
None	12
Don't know	3

43. In a lot of families these days, both mothers and fathers work outside the home. Do you personally feel this has a good effect, a bad effect, or no effect at all on children 12 years or younger,

44. What about both mothers and fathers working outside the home and its effect on teenagers. Do you feel it has generally had a good effect, a bad effect, or no effect at all on teenagers? (RECORD ABOVE)

	43. Children 12 and under	44. Teenagers
Good effect	25	26
Bad effect	39	18
No effect	29	46
Don't know	7	9

45. When mothers work outside the home, do you think their children generally get into more trouble, less trouble, or about the same amount of trouble as children whose mothers do not work outside the home?

More trouble	40	Same amount of trouble	48
Less trouble	7	Don't know	5

46. When mothers work outside the home, do you think their children generally do better in school, worse in school, or do they do about the same in school as young people whose mothers do not work outside the home?

Better	7	About the same	62
Worse	26	Don't know	5

47. Do you feel that young people whose mothers work outside the home are generally more independent, less independent, or are they about the same as young people whose mothers do not work outside the home?

More	47	About the same	38
Less	7	Don't know	7

48. At the present time, does your father work outside the home either full-time or part-time?

Works full-time	78	No father (vol.)	8
Works part-time	8	Don't know	3
Doesn't work	4		

49. At the present time, does your mother work outside the home, either full-time or part-time?

Works full-time	46
Works part-time	25 (ASK 50)
Doesn't work	26
No mother (vol.)	2 (SKIP TO 51)
Don't know	2 (ASK 50)

50. Regardless of whether or not she currently works outside the home, would you prefer that your mother have a job outside the home, or would you prefer that she stay at home to take care of the house and family?

Work outside the home	59
Stay home	34
No mother/don't live with mother (vol.)	1
Don't know	6

51. How many of your grandparents are still living?

None	4	(SKIP TO 55)
One	11	(ASK 52)
Two	23	
Three	26	
Four	26	
Five or more	8	
Don't know	1	

52. Do any of your grandparents live near you or not?

Live near,live with	65
Do not live near	34
Don't know	-

53. How often do you see one or more of your grandparents? Do you see them quite often, occasionally, or not very often?

Quite often	49
Occasionally	31
Not very often	19
Don't know	-

54. All in all, do you feel you see, talk or are in touch with your grandparents too much, too little, or just the right amount of time?

Too much	4
Too little	28
Right amount	65
It varies, some too much, some too little (vol.)	3
Don't know	1

55. Whether or not they are still living, how much do you feel you know about your grandparents? Let's start with your grandparents on your mother's side. Whether or not they are still living, do you feel you know a lot, some, or not much at all about them? (RECORD BELOW)

	55. Mother's side	56. Father's side
A lot	46	32
Some	33	34
Not much at all	19	30
Don't know	2	3

56. How about your grandparents on your father's side? Do you feel you know a lot, some, or not much at all about them? (RECORD ABOVE)

D-1. How old are you?

8 years old	8
9 years old	10
10 years old	11
11 years old	9
12 years old	9
13 years old	11
14 years old	10
15 years old	12
16 years old	11
17 years old	9

D-2. What grade are you in?

2nd grade	3
3rd grade	7
4th grade	10
5th grade	11
6th grade	9
7th grade	11
8th grade	10
9th grade (Fresh.)	11
10th grade (Soph.)	11
11th grade (Junior)	10
12th grade (Senior)	6

D-3. How many of your parents do you currently live with?

One	23	(SKIP TO D-5)
Two	75	(ASK D-4)
None	2	(SKIP TO D-7)

D-4. Are these both your natural parents or are either of these a step-parent? (IF "STEP-PARENT" ASK): Is that a step-mother or step-father?

Natural parents	64	(SKIP TO D-7)
Step-mother	2	(SKIP TO D-6)
Step-father	8	
Adopted (vol.)	1	(SKIP TO D-7)
Don't know	-	
Not asked	25	

D-5. Do you live with your mother or father?

Mother	19
Father	3
Not asked	77

D-6. Are your parents divorced, or is one of your parents no longer living?

Divorced	25
No longer living	4
Don't know	4
Not asked	67

D-7. How many brothers do you have?

None	31	Four	3
One	41	Five	1
Two	17	Six	-
Three	8	Seven or more	-

D-8. How many sisters do you have?

None	35	Four	2
One	38	Five	1
Two	18	Six	-
Three	6	Seven or more	-

D-9. Do you attend a public school, a private school, or a church run school?

Public	88	Church run	6
Private	6	Don't know	-

D-10. Is the school which you attend primarily composed of students of one race, or are there students from a mix of races?

One race	21
Mix of races	78
Don't know	1

D-11. Do you plan to go to college after you finish high school or not?

Yes	80
No	11
Don't know	9

D-12. Did your father attend college or not?

Yes	46
No	42
Don't know	12

D-13. Did your mother attend college or not?

Yes	43
No	49
Don't know	8

FACTUAL

Sex

Male	51
Female	49

Race

White	79
Black	15
Other	6

Socio-economic level (ESTIMATE)

Upper	1
Upper-middle	40
Lower-middle	42
Lower	12
Not sure	5

Name _____

Address _____

City or Town _____ State _____

Zip Code _____

Apt. # _____

Area Code _____ Tele. # _____

Date _____

Day of week:

First Saturday	Wednesday
Sunday	Thursday
Monday	Friday
Tuesday	Second Saturday

Interviewer's initials _____

79-0
80-3

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